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[THE WARNING.]

ELGIVA;

OR, THE GIPSY'S CURSE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Snap Link," "Evelyn's Plot," "Sybil's Inheritance," &c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

The child at rest before its mother lay,

Even so to pass away

With its bright smile. Elysium, what wert thou
To her who wept o'er that young slumberer's brow?

"Who nameth this child?"

The words were spoken by a dignified bishop, and addressed to some of the noblest of the land, who were assembled in the private chapel of Chetwode Castle to witness the christening of the heir of a long and honoured line.

The lady from whose arms the reverend prelate had received the child about to be admitted into the holy church of this realm had some of the truest "blue blood" in England flowing in her veins.

The Marchioness of Saltire, aunt of the babe's mother, had indeed consented with some difficulty to act as sponsor to Lord Morecombe's infant heir, for, to tell truth, the marriage of the young countess had been contracted in opposition to her relatives' wishes, and the joyful event which had brought such happiness to the parents was the first signal of peace and reconciliation between the dignified aunt and the fair young niece, who had once been as mother and daughter in affection and amity.

Lady Saltire regarded the beautiful boy with almost maternal pride.

"Oscar Fitzalan Morse," she said, distinctly, so that every syllable was clear and audible throughout the whole chapel.

Was it an echo in the vaulted aisles, or did a hollow laugh resound from a recess of the building at the words?

Lord Morecombe at least appeared doubtful, for he glanced sharply round with a look of well nigh terri-

fied anxiety in his well-marked features, and his delicate young wife watched her husband's troubled expression with a more gentle but as pained a glance as if she too had reason to fear some abrupt interruption to the ceremony.

But the bishop was too much absorbed in his sacred duties to be diverted by any such casual interruption, and he went on with the holy office calmly and deliberately till the babe was once more restored to Lady Saltire's arms, and by her transferred to the portly nurse, who stood in readiness to receive the hero of the day and carry him from the scene in which he had played a most decorous and dignified part.

But as she passed slowly and silently down the carpeted aisle, and the throng of spectators watched the exit with looks of interest and admiration at the lovely babe, the momentary pause was suddenly and thrillingly interrupted.

"The curse of the dying rest on the boy, and on his false, perjured parent!" sounded like a trumpet through the building, though whence the words proceeded no one could tell.

For a moment all was paralyzed consternation in the group. Then a low, deep sigh, almost a shriek, broke the hushed stillness.

Lady Morecombe had fainted, and lay senseless and rigid on the steps of the font, where her child had but just been blessed with the hallowed, soothing words which had been so daringly supplemented with the fearful curse.

The confusion was general and indescribable in its varied phases. Some rushed from the spot to search the chapel for the offender, others pressed round the fair form of the white and unconscious countess, and all exchanged looks and murmurs of astonishment and ominous suspicion at so extraordinary an occurrence.

Lady Saltire alone appeared to retain alike her self-possession and her freezing imperturbability to the emotions of the common herd. She quietly approached the spot where the earl stood as if struck by catalepsy and gazing into vacancy with fixed, strained eyes.

"My lord, are you mad?" she whispered. "At

least protect your wife and child from slanderous tongues, if you have no regard for your ancient name. Rouse yourself. Envious eyes are watching your every look and action."

The earl passed his hand over his eyes. It seemed as if some horrible vision had been haunting him, for he gazed suddenly round on the group with the air of a man waking from a dream.

"This is some insolent trick," he said, "that shall be severely punished. Gottfried, Burton, see that the park gates are closed and the whole domain searched," he added, turning to his confidential retainers, who had advanced at the moment. "Lady Saltire, perhaps you will kindly do the honours to our guests while I carry the countess to her room. I doubt not she will soon be able to resume her place among them."

Lifting his still insensible wife in his arms as if she had been an infant, he hastily passed from a side door of the chapel that led more directly into the wing of the castle where Lady Morecombe's private apartments were situated.

But he did not linger to superintend her recovery after she was once placed under the care of her maid and the nurse, whose functions were not yet relinquished.

With a hurried, agitated step, that spoke but too plainly the agitation of his mind, he rushed down the staircase from his wife's rooms to his own private library, where many of his solitary hours were passed, and to which the right of admission was granted to no one but his confidential valet, Gottfried.

Even this retreat he seemed to shrink from entering. He paused at the door with his hand on the lock, and his fingers literally trembled as they grasped the handle which would admit him to the interior of the apartment.

Cautiously, slowly he moved the door, and with a dreamy, sleep-walking air stole rather than walked into the room.

But there was a sudden recoil, a start, a half-suppressed cry. Then Lord Morecombe walked with a kind of desperation towards the spot where a figure

was seated with all the composed *sang froid* that betokened a right to the post thus occupied.

Yet there was little token of noble or of English birth in the dark, Spanish-looking face and form which awaited Lord Morecombe in that luxurious apartment, and equal absence of high breeding in the scornful air with which the intruder preserved his seat and scowled at the rightful owner of the domain.

"Pedro, what means this insolence? Are you utterly unmindful of the consequences of your insane presumption?" gasped the earl, at last.

"It is rather for me to ask such questions, Lord of Chetwode," was the calm reply. "I sometimes wonder whether such as you believe in Heaven or man—whether you expect that your sins are covered in the thick gloom of night, and your punishment as light as summer clouds. But your day will come; the retribution is at hand. Earl of Morecombe, Count of Arnheim, and lord of many a fair estate in this and other lands, do you remember Ginevra Santos, or is the image of her beauty, the warmth of her love washed out by the milk-and-water face, the cold insipidity of her rival?"

The nobleman literally covered under that haughty frown, that scornful look, which well nigh crushed him to the very dust. But the emergency nerved him to effort.

"This is idle presumption, Pedro. Your sister could never even have dreamt of occupying the place of my countess. Besides, if you speak truth, she is dead—was dead long since."

"True; she is dead, and you are her murderer, Earl of Morecombe. You won her love and broke her heart. Do you know that the hour when your marriage peal sounded was her funeral knell? Did you not feel a shiver chill your wedding joy, a curse mingle with the hollow congratulations of friends and acquaintances? Ginevra cursed you with her last breath—you and yours—and the doom shall be fulfilled. The white-faced wife, the infant child, shall be your victims as well as that noble-hearted, glorious girl. A bereaved life, a lonely death, disgrace and misery in life, a grave over which no loving eye will weep, no tender hand strew memorial flowers, shall avenge Ginevra's wrongs. Sooner or later the curse will work, and Pedro Santos will die happy when it is accomplished. Farewell, Earl of Morecombe, Count of Arnheim. Follow or eschew me at your peril. I have that in my breast which will avenge me on your craven, false head."

Opening a secret door, which the earl had believed was known only to himself, the gipsy passed like a vision from his sight, and only the terrible reverberation of his words remained to assure Lord Morecombe that the whole scene had not been some hideous nightmare.

"If you please, my lord, the collation is ready, and my lady requests your presence," was the first summons to real and present life which aroused the unhappy man from his reverie.

How long it had lasted he knew not, only he was but too conscious of the image of a glorious, brilliant, graceful Southern girl, the sound of liquid tones, the flash of passionate eyes that more than repaid to his whispered love. Then a vision of a white, dying face, of reproachful eyes, of murmured, registered curses, succeeded like a moving panorama to stupify his conscience-stricken brain.

He knew but too well that his whole love had been lavished on Ginevra the gipsy girl, even while the fair, gentle heiress of the Fitzallans of Chetwode had received his coronet and his hand.

"Did you say that your lady was in the saloon?" he asked as the man repeated his message.

"She is not yet, my lord; but the Marchioness of Saltire bade me tell you that the countess awaited your coming," returned the man, firmly.

Lord Morecombe comprehended and shrank from the message, but still he dreaded his wife's cold, penetrating aunt, with her unsparing sarcasms, her unchanging hate, and, with a hasty glance in the mirror, he repaired the slight disorder of his toilet and went to Lady Morecombe's dressing-room.

The countess was up and sitting in a large fauteuil, with a crimson spot on either pale cheek, that spoke of the agitation of her nerves.

Still she looked lovely in her exquisite toilet of blue and white, her fair brown hair descending in soft, rich curls on her shoulders, with only a blue ribbon clasped by an aigrette of priceless value as her coiffure, and a contour to match at her slender waist.

The earl could not but recognize the refinement and taste of that pure, high-born girl's whole toilet, and the gentle sweetness with which she met his embarrassed approach.

"Poor Bertram," she said, softly, as he took her hand in his. "It was very silly of me to faint and expose you to such anxiety and annoyance, but I will behave better now. Are you ready?"

"Isabel, you are an angel," he murmured, bending

down and printing a passionate kiss on her lips. "Is it possible you can still trust and forgive me?"

"Bertram, do you doubt it? Have I not sworn to love and trust you in good and evil, and shall I break my vow so soon?" she answered, throwing her arms round his neck with an answering embrace.

"My love—my guardian angel—my sweet, patient, injured wife," broke from his lips in scarcely audible murmurs.

And the delicate, fragile Isabel felt that she must play the part of comforter and support to the strong man whose usual mien was so stern and unshaken.

"Come," she said, "come! There is no time to lose, Bertram, unless we would be the sport of envious tongues. We must treat this miserable incident as it deserves—the insolent trick of some mad intruder. If we be true to ourselves others will not dare to malign us or question our happiness."

She took her husband's arm with a firm step and smiling mien, and appeared among the crowd of guests like a sunbeam amidst the gloom. Sweet, calm and loving, she moved among them with a self-possessed grace that even her aunt could scarcely have believed possible in such a contingency.

And yet when the infant was once more brought in to be present—when its health was proposed as the toast of the evening—the brave young mother gazed fearfully around, as if she feared that the curse would again mingle with the blessings lavished on the baby heir.

But no farther trial of her courage tested its strength, and the festivities of the day terminated with only smothered and whispered comments and surmises on the ominous incident that had so shaken the iron nerves of their noble host.

None knew the miserable secret that tortured the conscience of the father; and no human eye witnessed the fearful, agonising prayers with which the young mother knelt by her infant's cradle and called down Heaven's protecting care on the newly christened heir of Chetwode.

"Merciful Heaven! it is just three years to-day since my young lord was christened; and now it bids fair to be my lady's dying day," said Gottfried, sadly, as he and Mrs. Parsons, the housekeeper, shared a melancholy watch in an adjoining apartment to that where Isabel, Countess of Morecombe, lay on her death bed.

For it was no superstitious surmise, no gloomy fear that dictated the steward's prophecy; Lady Morecombe had sunk too gradually for there to be any hope of her rallying, and the physicians had cautiously declared that hours, not days, would number her remaining life on earth.

"Ah, me! She has never recovered that shock, though, after all, it was perhaps nothing but an infamous joke or idle revenge," mused Mrs. Parsons. "And I don't believe she would have taken it to heart so much except that Lady Saltire set herself to make matters worse. I heard her say to my lady on that very day: 'Well, Isabel, you are either a heroine or an idiot, and I expect it is the latter; for no girl of your temper could hide her feelings if she understood the real truth.' I could have bitten my tongue out before I would have said such a word to her, poor dear. Then the loss of the baby girl who just came as it were to tantalize her and carry out the curse, and I don't think she has ever been well since that confinement."

"Well, the curse has not done any other harm yet, any way," returned Gottfried, cheerily. "A finer, handomer child than my little lord never ran over turf and heather. Yet I sometimes think he has been more pain than pleasure to my poor lady—don't you, Parsons?"

"Well, so long as she was well enough she never was happy if he was out of her sight," observed Parsons. "I always fancied the curse haunted her and that she expected the child would come to harm in some way or other. And I'm sure that nurse my lord puts such faith in is not one to be trusted. There's a queer look in her eyes, and a dark scowl on her brow when she thinks no one is looking that I don't like—and, what's worse, can't understand. But of course it was no use saying anything to make my dear lady more unhappy; and, as to my lord, he nearly mugged my head off when I once hinted such a thing," she added, resentfully. "My lord's been a changed man ever since that day."

"It's beyond my wit to comprehend him, Parsons, and—"

But the conclusion of the sentence was never to enlighten his companion in particular or the world in general.

A low cry and then a hurried call from the inner chamber summoned Parsons to the sick-room.

Lady Morecombe had roused from the kind of stupor in which she had lain for some hours, and with one of the sudden flashes of animation that so often precede death had actually raised herself on her pil-

low and gazed around as if in search of some missing object.

"My child—my darling—where is he? Bring him—quick—quick; and the earl," she murmured, in a distinct though faint voice.

And Gottfried hastened away to perform the behest.

It was but a few brief seconds ere the door opened and Lord Morecombe appeared at the bedside.

"My Isabel, can you forgive me? Heaven knows I can never forgive myself," he murmured, bending over the dying countess. "I have murdered you—I feel it as much as if my hand had struck the death blow; but, if repentance could atone, my sin might even yet be pardoned."

"No, no. It was not so. I could not have lived, and it is best," she whispered. "I know there is a secret in your heart, and poor Isabel could not win its love. Be kind to our child."

"He shall be the sole object of my life, none other shall share its interest or its love," said the earl, in broken accents. "I will but cherish your memory and his happiness, my precious love."

"Where is he? Bring him—bring him, ere it is too late," she resumed, after a brief pause.

And even as she spoke a figure appeared in the doorway with a face that rivalled in its ashen hue that of the dying woman herself.

Gottfried, for it was he, stood beckoning the earl with a kind of frantic vehemence that well nigh paralyzed the limbs of him whose presence was thus urgently demanded.

But at length Lord Morecombe gently freed himself from the clasp of his wife's fingers, with a hasty "I will bring our boy, my darling," and walked tremblingly towards the half-frenzied attendant.

"Speak, man—speak!" he gasped as Gottfried tried to rain to frame his lips in words.

"My lord—my lord—the child, my darling young lord—oh, mercy, mercy, how can I speak it?" returned the shivering survivor.

"What of him, man?" asked the earl, with unutterable anguish. "Is he dead?"

"No, no, no—but he is gone—stolen—carried away, and, for aught I know, murdered!" gasped Gottfried, wringing his hands in agony.

"Go on," groaned the earl, "go on. Where? How?"

"In the woods, my lord. Marian took him for a walk, and while she was gathering some flowers he was caught up in an instant and disappeared like magic from her sight. That is her tale, but I doubt—I doubt that she is false, my lord."

Lord Morecombe did not reply save by a half-suppressed shriek as a cold hand was laid on his arm, and an unearthly voice murmured:

"The curse—the curse! Ah! Bertram, it is come at last!"

The earl's whole frame shook with terror at the ghastly look, the hollow voice of his dying wife, as he started round and beheld the form of the countess standing with supernatural strength at his side.

The dying woman had caught the words with the acute senses that sometimes precede dissolution, and had sprung from her couch, where she had so long lain in utter prostration and helplessness.

Lord Morecombe and Gottfried raised her in their arms and carried her back to the bed she had so marvellously quitted.

But the shock had been too much for the flickering lamp of life. Ere the wasted form was laid on the pillows the spirit had fled. And Lord Morecombe in one brief hour was a widower and childless in his desolate grandeur.

CHAPTER II.

I have breathed on the South, and the chestnut flower

By thousands have burst from the forest bower;

And the ancient graves and fallen fancies

Are reiled with wreaths on Italian plains.

But it is not for me in my hour of bloom

To speak of the ruin or the tomb.

"PLEASE, my lady, do not go near the Black Wood

to-day," said an old groom, who was, some eighteen

years after the tragedy recorded in the last chapter,

assisting a young and beautiful girl to mount her

horse on a splendid autumn morning that might

well tempt the most indolent from their repose.

The hour was indeed an unusual one for high-born,

dainty damsels to desert luxurious couches or tempting

fauteuils for such active exercise as the Lady

Elviga of Chetwode and Arnheim meditated on that

delicious October day.

But she was a worshipper of Nature, a professed

truant from all conventional rules and customs, and

it was at last confessed by duennas, governesses, and

servants that it was of no use to attempt any restraint

when the bright, wilful creature was bent upon any

of the expeditions that appeared so hopelessly wild

in all correct and decorous eyes.

Perhaps the extreme beauty of the girl, and the

free, lithe gracefulness which her equestrian feats and daring gambles gave to her every movement and limb had some share in reconciling her stately father and prudent chaperone to her perplexing tastes. And in any case the heiress and only child of a widower father was scarcely one to be controlled in even more dangerous waywardness than a passion for free air and forest glades and bounding exercise among her favourite haunts.

She shook back her jetty tresses, which were scarcely confined beneath her plumed riding-hat, as she asked, with laughing demureness:

"And pray why am I to avoid my favourite haunt on this bright, sunny morning, my good Gottfried?" she asked, her flashing eyes dancing with amusement at the old servant's solemn look and tone.

"Nay, Lady Elgiva, it is no jesting matter," he replied, shaking his head. "I only heard of it late last night, or I should have told my lord and had it attended to, my lady, without troubling you to change your ride at all."

"But what is the dreadful mystery, Gottfried?" asked Elgiva, smiling at the portentous gravity of the announcement. "Is there small-pox or a mad dog lurking in the dear old woods which I have not seen for these three long months? See, here is Miss Harcourt coming to share the wonderful secret."

As she spoke a gay, fair young girl, somewhat older, and decidedly less strikingly lovely than the Lady Elgiva, appeared on the terrace.

"It's worse than either disease or dogs, my lady," said the old man, sadly. "It's those dreadful gipsies, my lady, and I'm sure I wonder they dare to show their dark faces within ten miles of the park. But it shall be seen to before many hours are over, or my name is not Jacob Gottfried."

Elgiva did not reply so sportively as was her wont.

There was a slight shade on her bright face as she stooped over her horse and patted its glossy mane, but it passed away like a summer vapour, and with a kindly smile to the old servant, and a "Come, Mabel," to her friend, who was by this time fairly mounted, she gave her horse a slight touch with the silver-chased riding-whip, and then cantered lightly away.

Gottfried looked after her with almost paternal pride. "Ah, she's one by herself, that's certain," he mused. "Not a bit like most young ladies, all full of pride and vanity and dress. Bless her heart, she'd rather somper over one of the hills, or spring up a mountain like a deer, than have a dozen lovers at her beck and call. Many a time when I look at her, and hear her gay, clear voice I think it's all for the best, after all, though it does seem a shame for the estates to go out of the old line. Well, well, Heaven knows best!"

With this wise conclusion Gottfried returned to the steward's room till the hour of his daily audience with the Count of Arnheim, as the present Lord Morecombe elected to be called, should enable him to ease his burdened mind.

Meanwhile the girls cantered on with all the elastic joy and brilliant gaiety which youth and happiness and a delicious exercise could impart to body and mind. A pretty contrast they formed, albeit the palm for beauty would inevitably have been assigned to the earl's daughter if compared with the blonde charms of Mabel Harcourt.

In truth there was something so singular in the style of Elgiva Chetwode's loveliness that it was sufficient in itself to attract almost exclusive notice. The jetty hair, the almond eyes, the rich olive skin, might have belonged to a Spanish maiden, and the lithe grace and symmetry of her form seemed to point to the same Southern ancestry.

But there was English vivacity in those flashing glances, the gay girlish smiles, the bounding animation of the girl's movements, that formed a rare combination of charms which few could see without being irresistibly fascinated by one so gifted. Yet had she been less severely tested Mabel Harcourt's golden hair, sweet, innocent expression, bright bloom and dancing blue eyes, would have brought the epithet lovely to the lips of the beholders.

They rode on for some few minutes in silence, which Mabel was the first to break.

"What did that worthy old fellow mean by such solemn warnings about those very harmless folks the gipsies?" she asked. "Papa is never at all annoyed when they are near the Grange. He thinks them a kind of wandering tenantry whom he has no idea of expelling from his domain."

Elgiva was silent for a few moments.

"Did you never hear the story, Mabel? Do you really not know on what very slender tenure I hold my burdensome honours?" she asked, in a half-grave, half-arch tone.

"Certainly not. Do tell me. I delight so in my tales, darling Elgiva," exclaimed the girl, rapidly, with an excited flush on her cheek.

"Well, it is very seldom alluded to, even among our own family," replied Elgiva, with a touch of sadness. "Indeed it is so melancholy a tale that I scarcely like to think of it myself. Still I do sometimes recall it when I am getting too much spoiled either by my own dear, doting father or by my silly crowd of admirers, because it may serve to keep my giddy head a little more steady. It is as well to remember that I may fall from my pinnacle some fine day, Mabel, and to insist on others being prepared for the catastrophe."

"For pity's sake, Elgiva, do not keep me any longer in suspense," exclaimed Mabel, in half-comic despair. "I shall be in a fever if you go on so tantalizingly. What in the world have you and the gipsies and pinnacles and all that wonderful conglomeration of puzzles in common?"

"Simply this, Mabel, that some day a missing cousin of mine might make his appearance, and politely request me to retire from the scene and hand over to him all my rights and privileges as heiress of Chetwode-Arnheim," answered Elgiva, more lightly than she had yet spoken.

"However, to save you from an attack of brain fever and Dr. Farnworth," she continued, hurriedly, "I will explain the whole mystery. You must understand that my father was of a younger branch, Mabel, and to do him justice he never even dreamed of aught but the usual fate of his position; he has told me so a hundred times, dear, kind papa. And, when the earl married, the first and the most zealous of his well-wishers was his cousin. The countess was fair and good, so I have heard, but I suspect, Mabel, from some numerous hints that I have heard, not quite the first or the dearest in her husband's love. I fancy, Mabel, though it may be a girlish romance, that my uncle had some earlier love than his wife, and that there was not so much sympathy and affection between them as you and I would wish for, dearest. But at last came a son, and both were of course in an ecstasy of delight. And my little cousin was the very handsomest and noblest and most gifted child that ever looked to wear a coronet. I wonder, Mabel, whether the darling children whom I see running about the village are so very different to the small heir," she added, with a saucy laugh, "but in any case he was the idol of the whole household up to the very mature age of three. And then," she went on, more gravely, "a terrible calamity happened. On his birthday fete, when the tenants and brother were being fêted, though the countess was too ill to share in the revels, and the park studded with human beings, as if they had been leaves, the child was stolen—so the tale runs—by gipsies, and from that day to this he has utterly disappeared from any sight or knowledge of his relatives."

Mabel's breath had well nigh suspended during the recital, her lips parted with excitement, and her eyes flashed with the eagerness of her young brain.

"Go on, go on," she exclaimed, "What did the poor, dear countess do? Was she broken-hearted, Elgiva?"

"She was, Mabel dear," answered the girl, gravely. "In less than a week she was in her grave, and before I was born my uncle had followed her to the tomb. Some said he was remorseful for some early wrong he had wrought which had been the real cause of his child's loss and his wife's death. But that is merely a tale which I used to catch by stealth from my nurses when they thought I was too little to understand it, and perhaps I ought not to repeat it even to you, Mabel."

The young girl had literally drawn her rein, and was sitting on her horse like a statue as Elgiva spoke.

"Oh, Elgiva, darling, how dreadful!" she gasped, at length. "And you really do not know whether this cousin of yours is alive, or whether he might not actually appear like Banquo's ghost at your wedding banquet. Oh, I am so sorry for you, darling, yet I always thought you were the most enviable of human beings. You are so beautiful and rich, and the heiress to such honours that every one must be at your feet. I little dreamed of this terrible danger, dear Elgiva. If I were you I would marry directly, lest this dreadful little cousin should start up to ruin my prospects."

Elgiva laughed gaily.

"That is just what I am determined not to do, Mabel," was the firm reply. "If ever I did fall in love with any unlucky wight the first thing I should do would be to tell him he was very likely courting plain Elgiva Chetwode, and not the heiress to rank and wealth. But, Mabel, if you are not afraid, we will ride to this terrible place, that Gottfried considers a very den of thieves and tyrants, and see what we can learn of our fate. Of course they would never dare to come here if they knew anything of the story, and it would be a splendid test of their truth to hear what they will have to say to us."

Mabel hesitated.

"Elgiva, I am afraid; suppose they should be the very tribe who stole your cousin! They might do something dreadful to you for his sake."

Lady Elgiva laughed merrily.

"My darling little Mabel, you certainly have never learned logic," she said, with a pretty toss of her beautiful head. "If those excellent people had any desire that my cousin should enjoy his natural rights it would be a very remarkable way of showing it to steal him away from every prospect of inheriting them in peace. And if any such fit of remorse should seize his captors I am quite ready and willing to make my courtesy and retire from the stage without force or argument. But it would be a delicious joke; do come, Mabel."

Still the girl hung back.

"I wish you had a servant with you, Elgiva. It is so unprotected and helpless to be alone."

"The very thing I have fought at least a dozen pitched battles for," laughed the earl's daughter. "It is so detestable to have a groom within twenty or thirty yards of you, watching your every movement and wishing you would go on when you want to remain still, or return home just at the crisis of a delicious ride. No, I love independence and freedom, Mabel. I often think I should not at all object to throw off all trammels and roam about like a gipsy girl myself. Come, just try a gallop to the forbidden region, there's a darling."

And, giving her spirited Arab a slight caress rather than touch of the whip, Lady Elgiva led the way towards the direction of the dark, extensive woods that were the gipsies' quarters.

Mabel reluctantly followed, and for some few moments the girls pursued their course in an unusually thoughtful silence.

Perhaps the tale just narrated had given both food for reflection.

Elgiva recalled more vividly the reality of her own precarious tenure of her enviable possessions and the change that might at any moment hurl her from her elevated and worshipped eminence.

Mabel, with more passing but yet more thrilling alarm, gazed round in anxious terror on every object that came in view during their breezy gallop towards the sombre forest.

"Elgiva, stop—I am sure I saw something. Pray—pray do not go on, I am so terrified!" she gasped, as a shadow fell on the sunny path between the overhanging trees that already heralded the denser foliage of the forest.

The girl thus addressed was about to comply when a slight, tall figure suddenly seemed to spring from the very ground, and stood so immediately before them as to check their progress, and alarm the high-spirited horse which was Lady Elgiva's favourite steed.

Conrad reared and plunged, but his fair mistress was too practised and fearless a horsewoman to be daunted by his rebellious passion.

Mabel, whose more quiet and manageable horse scarcely attempted to emulate his companion's freaks, was the only one whose faint shrieks and whitened cheeks bespoke terror at the scene.

"Hush, Conrad, hush. Mabel dear, it is nothing. Just move back a few paces, if you please," were Elgiva's quickly spoken admonitions to the three most immediately concerned in the scene.

But the one most submissive to the mandate was the cause of the high-bred animal's alarm.

A slight, picturesque figure in a scarlet cloak and a kind of shawl wrapped round her small head in artistic grace, whose appearance had startled Conrad's sensitive nerves, quickly shrank within the shelter of the thick hedge.

In the very moment of her anger and alarm Elgiva could not but be struck by the haughty grace and classic beauty of that humble and obscure gipsy girl, whose garb so plainly bespoke her Eastern and Bohemian parentage.

Not even in the regal palace, where she had humbly bowed before royalty some few months before—not in the gilded saloons where the nobles of the land were assembled, and where Elgiva had been the coveted and admired belle—had the earl's daughter seen more perfect incarnation of aristocratic and imperious self-assertion and high breeding than in this attitude of proud humility and submission.

At length Conrad's terrors appeared to yield to his mistress's gentle soothing, and Lady Elgiva was at leisure to question the intruder as to her errand.

"Did you wish to speak with me?" she asked, turning towards the still-motionless girl with an eager though not inquisitive curiosity. "Can I do anything for you? Do you want aid?" she added, involuntarily feeling for her purse as she spoke.

But the gipsy drew back with a recoil as indignant as if their respective positions had been reversed, and waived away the small hand that was extended towards her.

"It is rather to save you than to take aught from your bounty that I am here," she said, in a liquid though measured voice. "Amico los Santos is no more of a beggar than the Lady Elgiva herself."

"Then you know me; you had an object in stopping me," said the girl, anxiously, a thrill of excitement rather than fear running through her frame.

"I know more perhaps of you than you do of yourself," replied Amico, calmly. "At least of your future fate I can tell what is to you a dark and unknown mystery."

The girl tried to laugh, and turned round to her friend for sympathy.

"Do you hear, Mabel? Are you inclined to have your fortune told? I thought," she added to the gipsy, "it was necessary to cross one's palm with silver ere you could see clearly into the future. Is it not so with you?"

"Not in your case," replied the girl, haughtily; "and, as to your friend, heiress of Chetwode, there is no rapport between her and me. I neither can nor will examine her destiny; it will, I dare say, be like the rest of those whom she resembles. She will be first a tyrant, then a slave, and at last a nonentity. Her fortune is soon told."

Elgiva tried to avert the angry retort that rose even to Mabel's gentle lips at so gratuitous an insult.

"If you are so bitter and so wise at your present age, Amico, I am afraid to share your knowledge," she said, playfully extending to her a small coral cross that hung from her neck; "but if you will take this to wear as a remembrance of me, and a charm to soften such hard thoughts, I will gladly bestow it upon you as a parting gift from the Elgiva of Chetwode whom you seem so anxious to alarm with dark sayings and warnings."

The young girl gazed first at the beautiful trinket with feminine admiration, then looked up in Lady Elgiva's lovely face with half-remorseful sadness.

"I thank you," she said. "You look kind and good, as if you were not despising the gipsy girl; and I would willingly obey your behest, but I dare not—I dare not. You must hear what I have to say," she continued, hurriedly glancing round her, as if expecting to see some dreaded object.

"Then has some one sent you, or what does all this nonsense mean?" exclaimed Elgiva, now really indignant at what appeared to be some deliberate and planned assault upon her credulity.

"I may not tell. I can but speak my errand, and leave you to believe or to disregard my warning," resumed Amico, calmly. "There was an evil genius at your birth, lady, and all the more dangerous because it has hitherto slumbered in its influence. But the sunshine that has brightened your days is soon to be overcast. You will be wounded in your tenderest desires. That which has been your greatest happiness shall be snatched from you; and the love, which may for a season fill your heart with joy, shall be your bane ere many months are passed. Ay, and you in your turn shall bring misery on him who loves you—yes, ruin and desolation threaten you and him if you persist in disregarding this warning. Lady, I read it in this small palm," and she pointed to the lines in the ungloved hand, with fingers as well shaped and slender, if browner, than Elgiva's own. "My words are true, as you will find to your cost should you disbelieve or disobey the oracle of Fate, which speaks by my lips. Farewell, lady; do not forget Amico, the gipsy girl, till we meet again."

Hastily secreting the cross that Elgiva had half unconsciously yielded to her, the girl sprang over the low plantation and disappeared in an instant within the thicket near which she had stood.

(To be continued.)

SETTLEMENT OF A LAWSUIT BY MARRIAGE.—At the Tipperary Assizes, held at Cronmell, Mr. Clarke, Q.C., in the Record Court, tried an action, in which Mr. Anglim was the plaintiff, and Miss O'Brien was the defendant. This was an action on title to recover a portion of the lands of Rose Green. The case was brought to a sudden and agreeable termination by Mr. Clarke. While the defendant, a good-looking young woman, was under cross-examination, the plaintiff was ordered up to confront her with reference to a portion of her testimony. Mr. Clarke, at this stage of the proceedings, whispered to the jury, and much merriment was occasioned. Mr. Hemphill inquired the cause of it. Mr. Clarke: "It just strikes me that there is a pleasant and easy way to terminate this lawsuit. The plaintiff appears to be a respectable young man, and this is a very nice young woman. They can both get married, and live happily on this farm. If they go on with the proceedings it will be all frittered away between the lawyers, who, I am sure, are not ungalant enough to wish the marriage may not come off." The young lady, on being interrogated, blushed, and stated she

was quite willing to marry the plaintiff. Mr. Clarke (to the latter): "Will you marry this young woman?" Plaintiff: "Most undoubtedly." Mr. Clarke: "It is odd this course was not before adopted. The suggestion came to me by instinct on seeing the young couple." Mr. Gibson said the marriage should take place at once. Mr. Hackett: "Give him a long day, my lord." Mr. Gibson: "The young lady is very anxious for the marriage." Mr. Hemphill: "Yes, but the weather is very hot at present—say September next. If the plaintiff breaks his promise a good action for breach of promise will lie against him." A verdict was subsequently entered for plaintiff on condition of his promising to marry defendant within two months, a stay of execution being put on the verdict till the marriage ceremony is completed. Mr. Hemphill: "The case is like the comedy, 'All's Well that Ends Well.'" The counsel gave the young lady such an unmerciful "chaffing" on her consent, which many in court thought should first come from plaintiff, that she left the court in tears.

MOTHERS AND ALL.

CALL it not a mere fond fancy
Of the doting mother while
She believes from angels' whisper
Comes her sleeping infant's smile;
But think it an intuition,
And from truth the rapture lies;
For thus o'er this sweet, pure slumber
Blessings may be given from skies.

By such sacred ministration,
Mid the chamber bright or dim,
Does not her glad heart give answer
In new gratitude to Him,
While she mingles love of husband,
Till, with many a tender kiss
On the baby's little forehead,
All her being swims in bliss?

Let us, like believing mothers,
Feel the angels' whispers true,
And in feeling be ennobled,
For we once were infants too;
Nor have doubt that yet the helpers
Minister in peace or strife;
Always as fond brothers, sisters,
Missioned to give love through life.
Oh, it is a faith most holy,
Full of strength as heaven of stars,
Making us to feel that Heaven
Sparkles through these earthly bars!
Then, ye gentle helpers, welcome
To the cradle or the bed;
By you there, and in life's labours,
May we to your homes be led!

W. R. W.

SCIENCE.

CANADIAN LIGHTHOUSES.—A lighthouse has been erected by the Government of Canada on Carleton Point, county of Bonaventure, Baie des Chaleurs. A fixed red light is exhibited at an elevation of about 32 ft. above high water, and in clear weather it can be seen at a distance of 12 miles. The tower is a square wooden building, 28 ft. high, and painted white. The illuminating apparatus is catoptric, and consists of three lamps and reflectors. The light was first shown June 1st.

AUSTRALIAN TELEGRAPHY.—A return issued from the electric telegraph department in Victoria shows the various stations in the Australian colonies to which telegrams may be forwarded. Victoria has 101 stations, to all and any of which messages may be transmitted at the uniform rate of 1s. for ten words. In New South Wales there are 92 stations, and the rate is 3s. for the first ten words. In South Australia the stations at the date of the return numbered 74, and messages are charged at the rate of 2s. for ten words. In Queensland there are 52 stations, and the uniform charge is 6s. for ten words, except for the northern stations. Tasmania has only 14 stations, and the tariff is fixed at 2s. per ten words on the land lines.

THE POLARISCOPE.—Most of our readers have seen an example of what is termed double refraction by looking at any object through Iceland spar, which is a crystallised carbonate of lime. When a piece of the spar is placed upon a sheet of printed paper, or any other well-marked object, two images of that object or print will be seen, each separated from the other by a small degree. If the rhomb of spar be turned slowly round, with the same face resting on the paper, one of the images will be seen revolving round the other. By judiciously sawing the rhomb of spar in two and cementing the surfaces with Canadian balsam, one of these double images may be entirely got rid of, and a piece of Iceland spar thus treated, and which is now well

known all over the world as a Nicol's prism, forms the means by which the great majority of the experiments with polarized light are at present made. This simple piece of apparatus is most extensively used wherever light and its various phenomena form the subject of research. No microscope of the better class is considered to be complete unless it has a polariscope attached to it.

INSTRUMENTS FOR OBSERVING EARTHQUAKE SHOCKS.

OWING to the great importance of being able to foresee the eruptions of Vesuvius, the late Government of Naples was led to put up an observatory to watch its signs. The house, built in 1844 on Mount Vesuvius, stands near the Hermitage, 2,000 feet above the sea, being placed on a ridge of the mountain, which has turned aside many lava currents without being itself submerged. It is founded on vaulted arches, above which is a large hall for specimens of lava and volcanic minerals. Steps lead up from this hall to the observatory proper. The whole is in charge of Professor Palmieri, of the Royal University of Naples, who, by his ingenuity and zeal, has brought the instruments to a state of great perfection.

The late eruption, which was so extensive and so fatal, was foretold by him as about to take place, and with admirable courage he remained in the observatory at the most dangerous period, when the building ran great risk of being ruined, in order accurately to observe the records of his instruments; a service for which, it is understood, he is to be made a senator of the kingdom of Italy.

The most important sections of the apparatus are the seismographic or shock-recording instruments, which are in a separate room, and are worked by electricity. There are also instruments for observing the electricity of the air, and the pressure of the wind and amount of rainfall, as well as the diurnal variations of the magnetic needle.

All former attempts at measuring and recording earthquakes depended directly on the shocks making their own marks; slight ones thus escaped notice, but by the use of electricity the certainty of record is invariable. The instruments are made to record the horizontal and vertical oscillations, the time of their occurrence, and their duration and direction.

Mercurial columns of ingenious forms are employed in the instruments. The agitation of the mercury, or its change of level, by any shaking of the earth, sets the delicate electrical recording apparatus at work, which instantly shows what has happened.

By means of this apparatus the astronomical time of the first shock is recorded, as well as the interval between the shocks, and the duration of each; their nature, whether vertical or horizontal, is given, as also the maximum of intensity; and, in the case of horizontal shocks, their direction is indicated. Professor Palmieri has the instruments examined three times a day, and an assistant observer is always at hand, to hear the bell and put back the apparatus to its normal position for fresh observations. It appears that it records all the violent shocks that occur in the Mediterranean basin; thus, on the occasion of the late eruption in the Greek Archipelago, Professor Palmieri was able to announce to the Neapolitans that a great disturbance had taken place long before the news reached Italy. The shocks in connection with Mount Etna are readily observable.

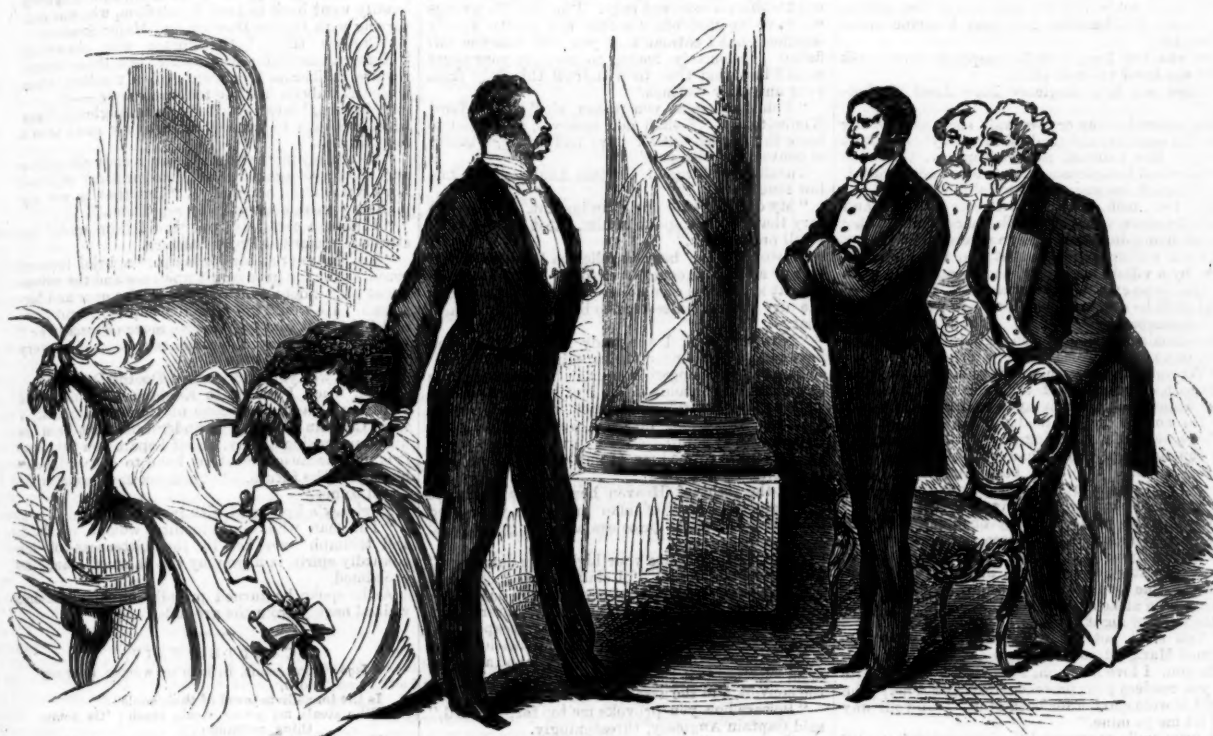
It is recommended that where earthquakes are frequent the observatory should be founded on solid masonry, bedded in the earth, and should consist of a wooden house not liable to be overthrown.

The following signs of an approaching eruption are considered reliable:

First, when the crater fills up and the vapour from it diminishes in quantity. Secondly, when the vapour from the crater gives much deposit of iron or sodium. Thirdly, when the water sinks in some of the springs of the neighbourhood.

The phenomena more nearly preceding an eruption are the occurrence of earthquakes, increasing in intensity and frequency for some days beforehand, also the irregularity of the diurnal variations of the magnetic needle. One of the remarkable attendants of an eruption (which may be observed to a lesser degree whenever the mountain is steaming much) is the frequency of lightning flashes, attending on the condensation of the vapour of water from the crater; just as, in an ordinary thunderstorm, lightning occurs at the time the vapour is condensing, as is proved by the rain that follows.

In addition to these phenomena of Vesuvius the volcanic activity of the district is shown by a gradual rising of part of the coast of the bay near Torre dell' Annunziata, where there is already an alteration of several feet; while on the other side of Naples, at Pozzuoli, the pavement at the edge of the harbour is sinking below the level of the water, and the pavement of the temple of Jupiter Serapis had, in the spring of 1809, sunk about 10 inches lower than in 1858.



[THE CAPTAIN AT BAY.]

MARIGOLD.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"The Image in the Heart," "Sweet Eglantine,"
"The Three Passions," &c., &c.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Heaven from all creatures hides the book of Fate—
All but the page prescribed, their present state—
From brutes what men, from men what spirits know,
Or who could suffer being here below? Pope.

THE happiness that reigned in the Eagle's Nest was so perfect that both Captain Anglesey and Marigold felt themselves amply compensated for the misery they had undergone during the weary years which preceded Lord Kimbolton's supposed death.

However acutely we may suffer here below there is a regenerative power in the human mind which enables us to forget the past and enjoy the delights of the present with redoubled zest.

Sometimes a cloud was perceptible on Captain Anglesey's face, for he could not forget the captive who was languishing away his life in the gloomy dungeon under the terrace.

An ever-present fear that he might escape haunted him, though when he thought of the precautions he had taken he became reassured, and the smiles of Marigold drove away his sorrowful forebodings.

Rarely was such love as they exhibited for one another to be seen in palace or cottage. No angry words passed between them, their hearts beat in unison, and at length their bliss was crowned by the anticipation that Marigold would become a mother.

This was all that was wanted to complete the happiness of the loving couple, who from their earliest youth had been devoted to each other, and the captain looked forward eagerly to the accomplishment of the event which would make him the most fortunate man in existence.

Marigold had been for some time suffering from lowness of spirits, and the doctor of the neighbourhood, who attended her, recommended a little change of scene, as he imagined she felt the monotony of her life at the Eagle's Nest; but as she refused to go away her husband suggested that she should accompany him to the *fête* at General Custozza's of which we have already spoken.

She consented to go, and looked forward with the impatience of a child for the promised entertainment, little imagining the dreadful blow she would receive in a quarter from which she least expected it.

On the morning of the day, which broke serene

and beautiful, Captain Anglesey might have been observed a little disturbed.

Guiseppa, upon whom devolved the daily attendance upon the imprisoned Lord Kimbolton, had not been seen since the preceding evening, and none of his fellow servants could give any account of him.

The captain fancied that he had run away and might betray him, or that he had met with some accident.

Then it occurred to him that the captive would perish from want of sustenance if his daily dole of bread were not supplied to him.

With a savage smile he said to himself:

"That would be a slight misfortune; let him die of starvation, he will be out of my way then. Perhaps it would have been best had I killed him outright at first, though I considered death too good for such a villain, and wished him to undergo the fearful punishment of life-long solitary confinement, out off from all his kind, so that the iron might enter into his soul, as he made it enter mine."

The carriage was at the door, and he went to the drawing-room to escort Mrs. Henderson and Marigold to the vehicle.

They were waiting for him.

Drawing Marigold to the window, he kissed her tenderly, saying:

"Are you happy, darling?"

"Perfectly," she replied. "How could I be anything else with you? Was it not the dream of my youth to be your wife, and is it not the hope of my age to remain in the same sweet position and still be sure of your priceless love?"

"Is it priceless, Marie?"

"I could not live without you. Did you not snatch me from the grave? Had I remained with Kimbolton I should long ago have gone to my everlasting home. Oh, yes, Frank, we are very dear to each other. Fortune is tired of persecuting us, and never, never again will dark clouds overshadow our lives."

Captain Anglesey pressed his hand to his heart as if in pain.

"Are you ill, dearest?" she continued, with anxiety depicted upon her speaking countenance.

"No," he answered, somewhat shortly. "It was only a passing spasm. I know not what to call it. Whether it was an omen of evil or not I cannot tell. But I must not sadden you with my silly fancies. Come, dear; the carriage waits. Amongst the best bred and the gayest in Venice we must show General Custozza, our kind host, that we too have light hearts."

Mrs. Henderson had already taken her place in the carriage.

Captain Anglesey led his pretty and fragile wife

to the grand entrance, and Marigold seated herself by her aunt's side. Then the drawbridge was lowered, the coachman whipped up the horses, and they started for the house of the Governor of Venetia, in whose spacious grounds the grand *fête* was to be held.

The drive was not a long one, and when they arrived at their destination the accomplished host and hostess received their visitors with a perfection of ease and grace that only a long acquaintance with the most polished society can give.

Handsome as was Captain Anglesey, and beautiful as was his wife, they saw other faces young and lovely as theirs, which indicated that the suffering they had gone through had left its mark upon them, as indeed it must do at all times.

The wear and tear of time will be seen, and when care has once set its wrinkled mark, however gently, upon a victim's face it is impossible to efface it.

Still they were very happy as they moved slowly about the spacious grounds laid out with all the taste of the best landscape gardeners in Europe, embellished with sweet-smelling flowers of rare hues, and blooming with tropical luxuriance. Now they dived down a leafy alley whose interlacing boughs kept out the hot noon-tide sun, and anon they emerged into the gay and giddy crowd and knew they were in the busy world once more.

A rustic chair, placed under an aged tree with spreading branches, affording a grateful shade, attracted Marigold's attention.

"Take me to that seat, dearest," she murmured.

"A sudden faintness has attacked me."

"Ah!" replied her husband. "The fatigue is too great for you. I feared that you would suffer from the unaccustomed excitement. We have led such a secluded life that the least stir affects us. Rest, my pet, and when you feel that you would wish to return to the castle I will instantly order our carriage."

They advanced to the rustic seat, and Marigold sat down, replying:

"Can you get me some refreshment—a glass of wine, an ice—anything to check this faintness? My heart scarcely beats. I wish I had not left our dear home where we have been so—so happy, Frank."

Captain Anglesey's face expressed the concern he felt.

Requesting her to await his return, he expressed his intention of ordering the carriage, and added that he would bring her some wine.

Marigold was alone; the fashionable throng did not promenade in the direction she had taken. It moved up and down in front of a band which was playing some excellent operatic music.

Suddenly she saw three men approaching her.

Two stood still on the gravelled path while the third advanced.

She could not believe the evidence of her senses, for it seemed to her that her dead husband stood before her!

She was not long kept in suspense, for a harsh voice she knew too well said:

"Does not Mrs. Anglesey know Lord Kimbolton?"

She uttered a tiny cry—a wail such as is wrung from the sensitive and tender-hearted by the acute agony. Her habitual pallor deepened, then the blood rushed in a stream to her face and forehead. She felt as if she were about to faint.

The two men, who were Doctor Dawson and Major Sanders, stood still with their arms folded.

Lord Kimbolton went on in a severe tone: "I am willing to believe that you were imposed upon by a villain and thought me dead, but that in my eyes is no excuse for your conduct. Your punishment shall be a warning to all women who are false to their husbands."

Summoning up courage enough to speak, Marigold, in a startled voice, said:

"Where have you been, and why did you allow me to remain in ignorance of the fact that you were alive while I was mourning you as one dead?"

"Do not be hypocritical," cried his lordship. "There was little mourning in your heart for me. My supposed death was a cause of rejoicing to you. During the time you have been living with your paramour I was languishing in a dungeon beneath the castle, so cunningly contrived that I was cut off from all the world, and my enemy might well be excused for thinking that escape was impossible, but happily I had true friends who would not believe in the story of my death, and at length they extricated me from my living tomb, to which, after having been attacked in my gondola, I was carried in the dead of night."

"You shall not take me away from him," exclaimed Marigold, in a frantic tone. "I will not go with you. I love him—oh, I love him—and my hate for you renders your presence insupportable. The world is wide enough for both of us. Go your way and let me go mine."

A grim smile overspread the emaciated but still aristocratic features of Lord Kimbolton.

"It is not my intention to wrest you from my enemy. I would not have a polluted thing, such as you are, near me," he said. "No; you shall stay with him, and the time shall come when you shall hate him with more virulence than you do me. You shall curse the hour of your birth and long for the day when death shall release you from insupportable sufferings. Branded as a woman of impure life, you shall be shunned by the members of your own sex, as an adulteress should always be, and, with Anglesey's affection animated and no offspring to needle in your bosom, you shall experience that terrible sense of the abomination of desolation of which the prophet spoke."

Marigold covered her face with her hands, as if the denunciation was too dreadful to be borne.

"Frank, Frank!" she cried, "come to me, save me! save me!"

"Your punishment is beginning," said Lord Kimbolton. "So surely as people sin they must sooner or later pay the penalty."

Captain Anglesey was hurrying back followed by an attendant who carried wine and cake upon a tray. He heard his darling crying to him for help. Hurrying to her side with the wings of the wind, he did not notice Doctor Dawson and Major Sanders nor did he recognize Lord Kimbolton, whose back was turned towards him. He only saw a man in front of Marigold, and he presumed that he was insulting her.

Without a word he seized him in a rude, feverish grasp by the arm and turned him round. His lordship looked him full in the face. The captain's countenance fell, he stood like one paralyzed. Releasing his hold, his arms sank by his side, and he stared like one bereft of his senses at the astounding apparition.

"Well, sir," exclaimed Lord Kimbolton, coldly. "Have I not a right to speak to my wife?"

"You here?" gasped Anglesey, impelled to say something. "I thought—"

He broke off abruptly.

"You thought," answered his lordship, "that I was still languishing in the dungeon you so infamously contrived for me. You thought I was your prisoner yet, without any hope or prospect of release, but thank Heaven I am a free man again, and you will find that I know how to repay injuries."

"Take me away, dear, dear Frank; I shall die if I remain here," moaned Marigold, in a piteous voice.

Her familiar tones recalled him to himself.

At first he had imagined that he saw a ghost, but the sight of Lord Kimbolton disabused him of this momentary superstition, and sufficiently explained the mysterious disappearance of Giuseppe which had troubled him in the morning.

"My lord," he said, "whatever cause of complaint you may have against me, I beg that you will not trouble an innocent lady. I believe the wrongs we have against one another are pretty evenly balanced, but I entreat that you will exercise sufficient gentlemanly feeling to restrain your anger until I have had time to withdraw this lady from your unseemly violence."

"You may act as you please, sir," replied Lord Kimbolton. "I shall not, however, allow you to leave this garden until I have had an opportunity of conversing with you."

Turning to Marigold, Captain Anglesey said, in a low tone:

"My darling, bear up for an instant. It is necessary that I should speak to him. Rest assured that I will protect you."

It would have been a relief to Marigold if her sorrow and alarm could have found vent in tears.

That solace was denied her; no tears flowed from the dry lids, which seemed to burn with unnatural heat.

"Now, my lord, I am ready to hear what you have to say," continued the captain.

There was a dangerous light in his eyes, such as one sometimes beholds in those of the tiger when he contemplates a fatal spring upon his prey, but he held the wild-beast instinct well in check and was outwardly calm.

"You have robbed me of my wife," began Lord Kimbolton.

"In the sight of Heaven her heart was always mine, only the laws of man made her yours, and how did you treat so priceless a blessing?" replied the captain.

"I do not appreciate your high-flown language," answered Kimbolton. "I simply state facts. In order to possess yourself of my wife you basely attacked me and had me conveyed to a subterranean dungeon from which I have this day escaped, and afterwards you spread a report of my death. This is not conduct which stamps an officer and a gentleman. Rather is it the behaviour of the blackguard, the convict, and the assassin."

"Beware how you provoke me too far, my lord," said Captain Anglesey, threateningly.

"Tush, man," answered Kimbolton. "The tables are turned now. I have friends in the immediate vicinity."

"I have only to raise my voice and state what has occurred to cause General Custozza to have you conveyed to prison."

Captain Anglesey glared at him, for he knew that the province was under martial law and no civil warrant would be required for his committal.

"That, however, is not my intention," continued his lordship. "Go to your home and take with you the guilty woman who once bore my name. My fortune which you have usurped I shall require from you, and the proper steps to obtain the control of it have already been set in motion."

"I have no need for it," said the captain.

"So much the better for you. I have a romantic idea of vengeance which you will see slowly but surely carried out. The hand will strike, but neither of you will see it. Blow will follow blow till your hearts break with weariness, but of Kimbolton you will know nothing. In one week I leave this country for a foreign shore, yet will my vengeance do you hear?—my vengeance follow you?"

"I am not a coward," exclaimed Captain Anglesey, "and you know me to be a gentleman; why not extend to me the courtesy I have a right to expect? Let us fight with pistols."

"Never; I might kill you! Death is too good for such as you. I want you to live so that you may suffer and live you shall."

"It will be best for you not to cross my path, for I shall not be over scrupulous," said Anglesey.

"That's an unnecessary observation," exclaimed Major Sanders, who could not restrain himself any longer from exhibiting his partisanship and concern for his friend. "We know all about your conviction and your villainous conduct to Lord Kimbolton."

"Excuse me, Sanders," said his lordship; "I can fight my own battle, and do not wish for your interference. Oblige me by remaining neutral."

Marigold showed signs of extreme weakness.

"Can I meet you later, my lord?" returned Captain Anglesey. "This lady was once dear to you, and now—"

"Now she is as the serpent is to those who come in contact with it, but I recognize your meaning; conduct her to her carriage and return to me," said his lordship.

He spoke in a commanding voice, and Captain Anglesey, glad of the chance of removing Marigold, raised her up with difficulty, put his arm round her waist, and carried rather than led her to a private entrance to the grounds, where after a few moments' delay he found his carriage.

Directly she reached it she sank upon the cushions and her eyes closed as if asleep.

Directing the footman to call some female attached to the household of General Custozza, as his mis-

tress had fainted, overcome by the heat and the excitement which reigned around, Captain Anglesey hastily went back to Lord Kimbolton, who was conversing with Doctor Dawson and Major Sanders. "Curious thing," the doctor was observing. "Highly remarkable occurrence, but these things require deliberate treatment. You recollect when Queen Elizabeth had the toothache how—"

"My lord," interrupted Captain Anglesey, "say what you have to say. I cannot stay more than a few minutes."

"It is in my power to make you remain altogether and have you again removed to prison," rejoined Lord Kimbolton, haughtily. "But that is not my plan—a punishment calls for repetition."

"I should certainly put the fellow under restraint," remarked Major Sanders.

"No," answered his lordship, "a brief term of confinement for his assault upon me and the subsequent illegal detention would soon be over and forgotten. He would not care for imprisonment now, and I shall let him go at large, more especially as I have no wish to have the romance published in every paper."

"What will you do?" asked Doctor Dawson.

"Oh, when I return to England—if I do so—I shall say I was in the power of Italian brigands. I want Captain Anglesey to understand that I am his uncompromising enemy, and if I spare him this time it is only because I want my hand to descend more heavily in the future. Let him ask his consort what I said to her."

Anglesey's lip curled with ineffable scorn.

"The man who would insult a woman, my lord, and triumph over her in the bitterness of his cowardly spirit, is unworthy the name of man," he exclaimed.

As he spoke he turned proudly on his heel and walked hastily from the grounds.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Jeze: Good name, in man or woman, dear my lord,

In the immediate jewel of their souls:

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;

'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;

But he who filches from me my good name

Robs me of that which enriches him

And makes me poor indeed! Othello.

WHEN Marigold, sad and unhappy, recovered from the swoon into which she had fallen at the unexpected apparition of her husband, whom she sincerely believed to be dead, the carriage was rolling rapidly along the road to the Eagle's Nest.

Captain Anglesey was supporting her with his arm, which he had twined affectionately round her waist, and was gazing into the liquid depths of her blue eyes with a sensitive concern.

In a moment the dreadful fact of her husband's existence flashed like lightning across her mind, and with an aching heart she recollected all that had happened.

"Marigold, darling," exclaimed Anglesey, "are you better? Tell me you have overcome the fleeting pain that the sight of that villain caused you."

"I remember all," she answered, in an agitated voice. "Never, never shall I be happy again."

"But you are still my wife, dearest."

"Not in the sight of all honest people. If Kimbolton is living how can I be your wife?"

"What do we care for the world?" he answered.

"Be brave, Marie. Loving one another as we do, we can afford to defy society."

"We cannot," Marigold said, sorrowfully. "If a woman offends against the strict laws which regulate the conduct of her sex her sin is sure to reach her sooner or later. Oh! I begin to despise myself already."

"Marigold, Marigold," he almost sobbed, as the tears forced themselves unwillingly to his eyes, "you must not, shall not talk to me like this."

"Frank," she replied, "it is necessary that we should see what is before us. You have deceived me."

"How?"

"By telling me that Kimbolton was dead when he was confined in a prison under the terrace. Often perhaps have I walked over his loathsome dungeon without suspecting the horrors of the hollow ground. Can I respect you after this?"

"At least," he exclaimed, "I am not guilty of his blood; I spared his life."

"In order to make your vengeance more complete. You know that I have not the smallest particle of affection for the man, yet you have not realized my ideas of honour. It was your brave conduct, your generous devotion that made me pity you so much, when to save me you declared yourself a robber and bore the punishment of the announcement."

"This is folly, dear Marigold!" he exclaimed, with the least suspicion of impatience in his tone.

"On the contrary, I am talking sense, Frank, and I cannot in future regard you as the high-spirited man I have hitherto held you to be."

"By talking like this," he said, "you are heaping coals of fire upon my head and helping Kimbolton to work out his vengeance. At least in all that I have done I have acted for your sake, have I not?"

"Better have let things remain as they were. I could not have died," she answered.

"Think that your love for me, dearest, is soon to be crowned with the sweetest pledge of affection that a wife can present a husband with."

This remark touched a chord in her heart to which few women could have remained insensible. She remembered that she was about to become a mother, but her emotions were mingled.

"It will be the child of shame, Frank," she answered.

"Will it be less dear to us on that account, my darling?" he exclaimed. "You are not to blame; you can acquit your conscience of any underhand behaviour. I told you that your husband, Lord Kimbolton, was dead. So cleverly had I managed everything that all people who knew him and as believed it."

"You did not act honestly, Frank; and when a man deceives a woman who has given him her heart it is difficult for her to regard him with the love she formerly held for him, though I will try to love you as deeply and forget the past, for the poor unborn babe's sake. Heaven grant it may never live to—"

Captain Anglesey put his hand gently upon her mouth, and prevented farther utterance of her thoughts.

"This is impious, Marigold. You are excited, and forget yourself. I must exercise my authority to restrain you from giving way to these transports," he said.

She sobbed hysterically.

"Little lady," said Frank, soothingly, as he used a pet phrase, "you must try to be good or I shall be cross with you and have to scold you."

"I will try to be good, Frank—I will indeed. But this is such a great blow to me, and I shall never be happy again," she answered.

Thinking that when the reaction set in she would be calmer, he wisely forbore to urge her farther, and the remainder of the journey was performed in silence.

Some days passed, and Marigold was extremely unwell. Premature confinement set in, and she was the mother of a little girl.

Captain Anglesey's delight was unbounded. He tended her with such care that she could not but thank him for his solicitude; but, though she smiled when the infant was shown her, there was a cloud upon her brow and a pain in her heart which nothing could chase away or remove.

The child lived.

When Marigold rose from her bed she evinced the most affectionate regard for her baby, which she did not like to allow out of her sight.

"They will take it from me," she said.

"Do you mean Lord Kimbolton?" asked Captain Anglesey.

"Oh, yes," she answered. "They will steal my child, Frank. Did you not hear all his dreadful threats?"

"But he is going away. I have relinquished all claim to his fortune, and I do not think he will trouble us."

"Let us hide; I cannot feel safe here. Take me to England or Scotland, Frank, and conceal me in some little cottage—in a place remote from the bustle of men. I shall die if they take my child away from me. This great, gloomy castle once had charms for me, but now I detest it. Kimbolton said that the hand should strike though it was not seen. He is sleepless in his revenge. Oh, take me away—take me away!"

"If you wish it, dear," he answered, "we will remove to England."

"I do wish it. Discharge all the servants; make them a present and they will be satisfied. I want to live in seclusion. Go at once, Frank—go to-morrow!"

Thus urged, Captain Anglesey could not refuse Marigold's request, nor did he experience much dissimulation in complying with it, as he too longed for a change of scene; and, though he affected to despise the enmity of Kimbolton, he was in reality uneasy, for he had injured him too deeply to be forgiven.

The servants were discharged.

Flora and Teddy had their expenses paid to England, and agreed to be married on their arrival, for they had both saved a little money, and a country inn was the highest object of their simple ambition.

Captain Anglesey made all his arrangements with the strictest privacy, and in a short time found and bought a small but picturesquely situated cottage at the mouth of the Avon, some miles from Bristol.

A more retired spot could scarcely have been selected; the sea rolled up the beach, and, when the wind was high, the spray beat against the windows. Flowers and creeping plants adorned the grounds and walls in summer, and here with only one old woman as a servant they took up their abode.

Mrs. Henderson went to reside in London, living by herself.

The cloud slightly lifted from Marigold's brow now, but all the love she had formerly felt for Captain Anglesey seemed to have centred in her baby.

He remarked this with inward displeasure, and it was clear that his dream of bliss was at an end.

Marigold had eyes and ears only for the child. When the tiny little baby girl was nestling and crowing in her lap Anglesey might address her half-a-dozen times without receiving an answer.

With a heavy heart he lived on, hoping for a change, longing—oh, so ardently—that she might love him as she had done a few months before, and as he still loved her in spite of all.

CHAPTER XXV.

My tender wife—sweet soother of my care,
Struck with and anguish at the stern decree,
Fell, lingering—fell a victim to despair,
And left the world to misery and me.

The Beggar's Petition.

On the outskirts of the Clifton Woods, not very far from the pretty cottage Captain Anglesey and his melancholy Marigold had selected for their residence lived a labouring man named Hardy.

He was the foreman of a farm, which position he had obtained by his general good conduct. He had been much better educated than the majority of his class, was sober and industrious—in fact he might have been taken as a specimen of what the model working man is expected to be by his admirers and critics.

Heaven had dealt hardly with him.

For some years his prosperity had been unequalled; a general favourite with every one, he had not an enemy.

He married a girl whom he loved with all his soul, but in giving birth to her first child and daughter she expired with her husband's name upon her lips.

This was a great blow to Hardy, who was left with the helpless infant.

However he transferred his affection from the mother to the child, and for three months lavished every care and attention upon it.

At night he tended it himself, but during the day, when he was at work, a woman came in to nurse the helpless infant.

For some days past the weather had been very threatening, but Hardy was used to exposure. He left his work earlier for his child, deprived of a mother's care, had been very ill. The doctor had been to see it, and the nurse shook her head gravely when he entered his little cottage.

"No better, Margery?" he asked.

"Worse, sir. I'd stay all night if I had not my own little one to mind," was the answer.

"It does not matter. Has the doctor left the medicine?"

Margery pointed to a bottle, and, wrapping herself up in her shawl, took her departure, muttering imprecations upon the weather, which was boisterous in the extreme; the wind blew high and rain beat wildly against the windows.

A storm was raging, and its violence redoubled every minute.

The wind tore the leaves from the trees and twisted them round and round with fearful velocity.

Hardy rocked the cradle, and listened to the moaning of the little one, which was at times drowned by the force of the tempest without. The very trees seemed to groan as they writhed under the gale.

He thought of his wife who had made his home happy—that home which was now so desolate and miserable.

Hours passed, and by the light of the single candle on the table Hardy watched his child, giving it food and medicine as he thought they were required.

It was eleven o'clock, and the wind threatened to overwhelm the cottage, which was shaken to its foundations by the sudden gusts. One of the tiles hurled from the roof fell with a crash into the yard, then all was still.

Hardy knelt down by the side of the cradle. He was a religious man, and not ashamed to pray for his child, believing that Heaven might be moved to spare its precious life.

It was all now that bound him to the past—the only link between the dead mother and the living father.

He was paler than he had been when he followed his wife to her last resting-place in the village churchyard some miles distant.

Engrossed in silent supplication, he scarcely heard the tempest, which would have frightened many and have made the superstitious believe that the end of the world was coming.

Another hour passed, and he was sitting with his face buried in his hands.

Suddenly he started and bent anxiously over the child.

No sound of breathing came from its lips. Its pulse was still, and the little hands were already growing cold.

His first impulse was to rush out bare-headed into the blinding storm to search for the doctor, but his sense told him that human help was vain.

The child had gone to join its mother in heaven. He did not complain, but a tear coursed down his cheeks, and his heart was desolate and broken.

Often had he looked forward to this child being the support and pride of his approaching age—a little fair-haired thing, cast in the image of her mother—the pet of the village, the Queen of the May; dreams—all dreams, and empty, mocking visions.

So many misfortunes had come upon him recently that he fell into a kind of stupor, from which he was aroused by a sudden and peculiar noise.

At first he thought it was the effect of the wind, as the door of the cottage flew readily open, but shadowy forms appeared on the threshold, and he knew that some one had intruded upon his privacy and his grief.

Raising his head, he was confronted by three men, who had enveloped their bodies in large heavy cloaks, and covered their faces with small velvet masks, which effectually concealed and disguised their features.

The three men had a peculiar air of command about them, and did not appear to belong to the lower classes.

This apparition at such an hour and on such a night, with the tempest still howling, somewhat astonished Hardy, and even alarmed him. A few minutes before he was plunged into the depths of despair, now he gave way to a craven and almost supernatural fear.

Who were these men? and what did they want with him? Why did they come to him in the depths of the night, and glare so strangely upon him with their burning eyes?

(To be continued.)

LORD DANE'S ERROR.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BREATH looked up into the baron's face once more.

"Have you anything to tell me?" he asked.

"Nothing now. I may soon have. I hope to have very soon."

His words struck no ray of hope in Volney's depressed soul.

When another might have gathered sanguine anticipations from the baron's tone he only experienced a sort of shuddering foreboding.

Baron Chandos still held his hand. He pressed it warmly in his.

"Let us talk of something else," he said. "We must not forget that Dane may find his way hither any day."

Volney's look hardened suddenly. A bitter expression flashed over his face.

"Let him," he said; "let him come."

"He is like a madman still." It is most unfortunate that you and he should have loved the same woman. You see I know everything. He must not meet your wife."

"Let him come, I say."

"We may not be able to hinder it. Do you mean that you are prepared to let him tell her everything?"

"I mean that I have at last resolved to end this miserable horror of apprehension. I will tell her myself."

Baron Chandos looked at the haggard, handsome, desperate face.

"If you could tell her all," he said.

Volney shut his teeth hard.

"I can and will."

"What you know of her father's death too? Will you ever be able, under present circumstances, to convince her that you had no hand in that? Things look black against you."

"I can tell it just as it was. I can't do more than that. I must risk it. I must, I tell you. You don't know how I feel. It seems to me that I shall go mad if I don't speak."

The baron looked at him gravely and anxiously.

"You would be mad to tell her in the state you are in now. You will need all your self-possession and coolness. Approach her carefully, break in to her delicately, appeal artfully to the circumstances, and her undoubted love for you, and you will win the day. Be rash and hasty, go to her in the agony and insanity of remorse and self-reproach you are in now, and she will take you at your own valuation of yourself. She will condemn you at once. Besides—hear me out, Volney—if Dane should come at all he will have you arrested as Vassar's murderer. He means to give you your choice of fleeing for your life, leaving him to tell your wife the truth as he regards it, or be arrested for her father's death."

A look of black wrath and despair convulsed Heath's face.

"Let him come!" he said; "he can prove nothing."

"You met Vassar that night?"

"How do you know?"

"They have found the note you got from him. You dropped it somewhere. They found the dead dog, too, and the doctor you made believe you were Lord Dane has never forgiven you the cheat. He has told about dressing your wound that night late, and of seeing you come from the direction of the Ghost's Hollow. It will go hard with you if you have to stand a trial. Public opinion has condemned you already. Think what it would be to your wife, that delicate, proud, and sensitive creature, to see you under trial for her father's murder. Would she, so high-strung and ambitious, ever survive the horror, humiliation, and agony?"

Volney groaned aloud.

"I'll tell you what, baron," he said, bitterly, "I had better go away as Judas did and hang myself. Tell me, don't you think it is the only course left me? Oh! that I had never, never been born!"

Baron Chandos looked startled. He put his hands sternly on Heath's shoulders.

"If you talk in this way I will have you arrested myself to keep you out of mischief."

"If it were not for Sybil knowing it you might and welcome. Better you than Dane."

"Tush! the chances are that Dane will not come at all."

"You thought differently a moment ago."

"I wanted you to be prepared for the worst."

"What is to hinder him coming, any more than you?"

"I chanced to meet your wife's former maid. She had just received a letter from the girl now in your wife's service. I paid her to tell me where you were, then I paid her as much more to tell no one else."

"Dane will outbid you."

"Hardly. I told her whatever he offered her I would double it if she remained silent."

"She will never remain silent. If Dane has found her he has made her tell him."

"They may never meet. At all events he is not here yet."

Heath did not speak for a moment. He was listening to some sound from below. His eyes seemed starting from his head.

"Hark!" he said; "some one has come. It may be Dane now. We receive no visitors."

Baron Chandos darted to the door of the chamber and threw it open, listening intently. There was certainly some one knocking loudly at the front entrance of the chateau.

Heath advanced.

He was calm outwardly now; but his face was set sharply, his eyes like two darts of flame. He showed Chandos a pistol in his hand.

"I carried it for you!" he said. "Now if this is Dane he shall have it, or I will use it myself. Will you let me pass, baron?"

The baron glanced at him.

"You shall not pass this door, you madman, unless you kill me first. If you will promise to remain here I will go and see who has come, and bring you back word. I swear to you, if it is Dane, he shall not see your wife."

"Go then."

Heath sat down in a chair, as if he consented to remain.

"You will not leave this room till I return?"

"I will not."

Chandos hesitated; he did not like the glitter of Volney's eyes.

"Give me that pistol, then."

Volney extended it.

The baron quitted the door to take it; but before he could do so Heath had sprung from his chair, dodged past him, and dashed out of the room like a madman indeed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

PERDITA LORNE possessed a keen perception. Her intuitions were remarkably clear. In going with the false valet to see his master she was acting in opposition to both. Not that she suspected the letter to be a fabrication, but she felt intuitively, and from the very nature and form of the summons, that all was not right. She had a presentiment of evil, a chill foreboding was on her from the first, but so little knowledge had she of wickedness and deceit that her misgivings took no definite shape, and in spite of them she had decided to go with Cheeny.

She hastened to pack a few things only, such as she might most need, though too pained and alarmed to know much what she was about.

At the last she had not thought what word she should leave for her adopted mother in case she returned home first. She gave the key of the house in charge of a neighbour, saying that she was unex-

pectedly called to see a friend who was ill. But she left no word for the widow, thinking she should be back first.

Cheeny assisted her into the cab he had brought. Her travelling-bag, which was all her luggage, was lifted in also, then the valet took his seat beside her and they drove to the station.

They were only barely in time.

During the journey little passed between them. Cheeny sat apart, his look studiously thoughtful and anxious, but an evil exultation broke through now and then as he pictured what his future would be if he succeeded in his deeply laid plans.

Perdita sat silent, miserable, still full of misgivings, but unable to assign to herself any real reason for them other than her fears for Lord Dane's life.

They left the train at midnight, proceeding afterwards by carriage, and the same silence continued between the two.

Perdita felt a strange and increasing reluctance to addressing Cheeny or having him speak to her, and the valet himself had no desire to talk at present. He was thinking what he should say when Perdita discovered the trick he had played upon her. He was wondering how long it would be before this lovely, spirited girl, whom he believed to be the rightful Countess of Dane, would give in to his plans for her and himself. Not long, he imagined, when she fairly realized how completely she was in his power.

They reached Rylands about daylight.

It was a desolate place perched upon a sort of rocky crest somewhat difficult of access and overhanging the sea.

The house looked more like a small castle than a dwelling, and seemed to Perdita's gloomy fancy to frown upon them as they slowly approached it by the rough and rugged road.

Cheeny got down from the carriage and rang a bell at the tall iron gateway.

It was opened presently by what looked like a boy with a man's stature. A nearer view of this curious being as he leered into the carriage at her made Perdita shrink with mingled revolting and terror, for she perceived that he was either an idiot or nearly so, and his aspect partook of a brutish ferocity that nearly caused her to cry out.

Cheeny noticed this with one of his evil smiles, and as the carriage passed into the gloomy court-yard, in which was neither tree nor blossom, he remarked, watching her furtively, that Grizzle—thus he called the great idiot—was better than a watch-dog, he had the strength of a giant and the instinct of a bloodhound.

Perdita glanced back with a shudder at the creature, who was at that moment shaking an immense shock of long, bristling red hair over his fiery eyes. He gave a strange, horrible laugh as she looked towards him, showing as he did so strong, sharp, white teeth like the tusks of some animal.

"He looks dangerous," she murmured.

"He is so to every one except my aunt and myself," Cheeny said, in a slow, significant voice. "My lord himself would not dare try to pass that gate without one of us with him."

The wicked valet gave the young girl a queer look as he said this.

Perdita caught the glance and wondered, but she merely asked, as she descended from the carriage, if he would ascertain at once if Lord Dane was ready to see her.

"I will do so," Cheeny promised, gravely, and conducted her up a flight of stone steps, at the top of which stood a tall, gaunt, grim-looking woman, with a straight gray hair cut short at her neck and heavy gray eyebrows. Her eyes were small and seemed colourless, her face was utterly devoid of expression except a grim stoniness of aspect most forbidding to see. She moved like a machine as she led the way into the house.

A dark, damp, narrow stone passage faced Perdita, at sight of which she involuntarily drew back and glanced at the waiting carriage with its driver sitting staring in a sort of stupefaction.

Better a million times would it have been for her if she had turned then, sprung past Cheeny, and run into the carriage, shut herself in and imperatively ordered the driver to take her back the way she had just come.

Some such impulse did flash over her, but she restrained it as an unnatural frenzy, and followed the stony-visaged housekeeper, with her heart sinking like lead at every step.

They paused before a doorway sunk deep in the thick wall, the door of carved oak black as ebony with age.

The housekeeper threw this door wide open. It creaked on its hinges.

Perdita uttered an exclamation as she saw the dreary room beyond. Then with a desperate courage she entered and stood looking about her with a sort of roused and fearful curiosity.

It was a large apartment, lighted by two narrow windows, as much stone as glass almost, and the roar of the sea could be heard somewhere far below.

There was a tall bed in one corner, with a faded red canopy above it, and spread with old, moth-eaten silk quilts. A toilet stand, draped in similarly dilapidated finery, with a bowl and pitcher and a cracked glass above it, was between the windows. A square of what had been elegant carpet covered the centre of the huge, comfortable room. There was a fire-place but no fire.

Cheeny spoke crossly to the grim old woman he had called aunt, and ordered a fire to be immediately lighted.

Perdita sat down in an arm-chair of the same dilapidated aspect as the rest of the room.

"Is it possible that Lord Dane is staying here?" she asked, in a voice of dreary wonder.

Cheeny closed the door before he answered her, and stood with his back against it.

The exulting smiles which he had so long repressed broke forth now and shed a baleful glow over a face that might have been handsome if it had not been so wicked.

"Lord Dane is not staying here, Miss Lorne," he said, laughing evilly. "It was a trick to get you here, where I could manage you without being interfered with."

Perdita turned about and stared at him.

"What do you mean? What impertinence is this?" she demanded. "Go at once and inform your master that I am here."

She spoke with such imperiousness, her beautiful eyes flashing and her whole bearing so spirited, that the false valet quailed for a moment.

The next he shook off the feeling and laughed loudly.

"My master never comes here, miss. I don't mean he ever shall while you are here."

Perdita rose from her chair looking at him.

"Are you mad?" she asked.

Cheeny grew suddenly grave.

He shook his head slowly.

"Please to sit down, Miss Lorne, and I will explain."

Perdita lifted her little hand with an imperious gesture, her sweet face whitening, the monster seemed so fearfully in earnest.

"Speak," she said, "and be quick."

She remained standing, her eyes like two darts of flame.

Cheeny obeyed her. His glance glittered as he spoke, in a hard, cruel voice:

"Lord Dane has never thought of you since the few days he passed in your society at Falkner. If he had even remembered you would he have called you 'Sybil' at Lenseleigh?"

"He explained all that in a letter which he wrote me," Perdita said, in a low voice.

"Which I wrote, Miss Lorne," Cheeny resumed. "Lord Dane knew nothing of those letters which you suppose were from him. I saw you at Falkner, I had seen you before in London, I was in the same train with you when you went away from Falkner, I watched you all the way, I scarcely took my eyes from your face, but you never saw me. All your thoughts were occupied with Lord Dane, though you fled from him like a sensible girl. I loved you from the first moment."

Cheeny paused, his face flushing. Perdita's scarlet lips curved with anger.

"Go on," she said, haughtily.

"I knew well that any advance I might make to you in an open, honest way would have been received with scorn. Therefore, knowing that you had a weakness for his lordship, and wishing to get you here quietly, I adopted Mr. Heath's plan. I borrowed my lord's name and title and wrote you as I did."

Perdita's hand was at the bosom of her dress. She drew forth a package tied with blue ribbon. The letters she had supposed were written by Lord Dane had been so treasured till now.

"You wrote these?" she gasped, between horror and grief.

"Each one."

With a low cry and a gesture of loathing she flung them into the empty fireplace.

She covered her face with her hands, shamed and stricken, scarcely able yet to realize how horribly she had been betrayed.

Cheeny's hateful voice broke upon her ear again:

"Will you hear the rest? It is not much."

Perdita lifted her head proudly; her young face was pale, her lips quivering, but her hazel eyes glowed with spirit.

"Go on," she said.

"I am a more honourable man than Lord Dane after all," Cheeny said, quailing in spite of himself before that indignant glance.

"Oh, indeed," said Perdita, mockingly

Cheeny pretended not to hear her.

"Lord Dane would never have asked you to marry him, however much he might have pretended to love you. I am not a nobleman, and I have not a town house and fine country seats, but I am far from being a poor man either. I have saved money. In short, will you marry me, Miss Lorne? I love you a great deal better than the earl does, and if you will become my wife we will be married by special licence to-day, and go back to London to-night."

Perdita's quivering lips curled with scorn. "Humph," she said. "You are very kind, but I don't think I shall marry you. I am very sure I shall not, and should not if you were a peer of England."

Cheeny scowled darkly.

"You are in my power. There are worse things than marrying me in store for you if you refuse to become my wife," he said, threateningly.

"I doubt that," Perdita answered, with a scornful laugh. "I cannot imagine anything worse myself."

"Not being given over to the tender mercies of the creature you saw at the gate?" sneered Cheeny, feebly.

Whatever the young girl felt at this horrible threat, she faced her persecutor defiantly.

"Not even that," she said, in a bold voice. "I would marry that half-idiot, half-savage thing sooner than you."

Cheeny turned fairly livid with rage. He had been upon the point of telling her, of giving her a hint at least, of that lofty rank in life which was hers of right, but which she should never possess save as his wife. Now he resolved to tell her part of the truth and add to it a worse and more infamous fabrication and slander than he had yet uttered concerning his master.

"Wait," he said; "I have not told you all. Lord Dane did write those letters."

He paused.

A flash of joy transfigured Perdita's lovely, drooping face.

Cheeny smiled as a demon might.

"I know he wrote them," Perdita said, triumphantly.

"He wrote them only to beguile you though. I could not write a delicate, aristocratic hand like that, or express myself in so polished and fascinating a style. He wrote them for the purpose of betraying you to a frightful fate."

Perdita smiled incredulously, but her lips were colourless.

"He did," reiterated Cheeny. "Have you forgotten the last letter I brought you, in which he told you that he was dying, and besought you to come to him here? He is not here. He has not been here for years and years."

Perdita's small head dropped like a rose broken at its stem. It sounded so frightfully like truth. Suddenly she looked up with a flash.

"He may be dying somewhere for aught I know. He sent you to bring me to him, and you brought me here instead."

The wicked valet shut his teeth hard. His eyes burned more evilly still as he said, slowly:

"You may believe me or not, but this is the truth. That letter was written for the purpose of getting you here where you are. I was to bring you here, then go away with my aunt, leaving you locked in with that idiot brute. That is the whole truth."

He took a blasphemous oath to testify to the truth of this deceitful story.

"I asked you to marry me as much out of pity as love, to save you, for the earl is pitiless and means to hunt you down to destruction wherever you hide."

Perdita's courage had sunk during this recital and then rallied again. She looked Cheeny calmly in the face.

"I don't believe one word you have uttered. Why should Lord Dane wish to destroy me? The evil one himself must have taught you how to contrive such falsehoods."

"Wait," said Cheeny, with a deliberation and assurance that turned Perdita cold again. "Mrs. Lorne is not your mother. Is she? You do not know who you are. You have not a clue to your rightful parentage except a single cipher embroidered on one of your garments you wore when you were brought an infant to Mrs. Lorne. Is not this true?"

"What if it is? It was never made a secret," said the young girl.

"The cipher—is it like that or not?"

He pointed to a coat of arms carved in the oak panelling above the chimney-piece.

Perdita's eyes dilated.

"Yes; it is like that," she said, wondering.

"True. Well, that was the coat of arms used by the Danes before ever there was a lord in the family. The present earl is only the seventh of his name. They were merely baronets before that, and used those arms. Now, these are wrought in with the

other. Your mother was a Countess of Dane. The present earl, or he who calls himself so, does not come into the title by the direct line, but through a branch. Do you begin to comprehend? I don't know all the story, but Lord Dane does. The estates and title descend in the female line, and you are the direct heiress of both. He has discovered this, but he has not been able to obtain possession of and destroy the proof. Hence he adopts a shorter course—he destroys you."

Cheeny ceased speaking, with a fiendish and malignant countenance.

Perdita was fain to sit down without replying. Her limbs trembled so that she could no longer stand.

The old woman whom Cheeny called his aunt had come to the door long since to light the fire, and Cheeny had told her to wait. Now he opened the door and bade her hasten with the fire and bring some breakfast to Miss Lorne.

In a short time the dismal, damp room was brightened by a cheerful blaze, and Perdita, with her hat on the floor beside her, and her travelling cloak loosened and thrown back, was basking in the light and warmth.

Hers was an elastic temperament; trouble could not crush or many terrors affright her. Just in proportion as her situation grew desperate her courage rose invincible. The thought that he whom she had set up in her young heart as in a shrine for worship had contrived so horrible a wrong for her—the thought that he whom she had believed in as the embodiment of all chivalry, generosity, and goodness could own so black and bad a heart as Cheeny would make her think, had daunted her at first, but she yielded to the pressure only briefly.

"A man who could do what this one has already done," she thought, "is capable of inventing all the rest. How do I know that that is the Dane coat of arms? I have his word for it only. I will believe nothing at present but that I am to an extent in the power of a bad man. I will think of nothing but how to get away from him."

When her breakfast was brought to her—a plain but well-cooked meal—she partook of it with a relish that surprised Cheeny beyond measure.

Perdita caught his amazed looks, and smiled bravely.

"You see there is plenty of spirit in me yet. How long do you mean to keep me here?"

"I have told you, miss."

Perdita pushed back her chair; she had eaten enough. She leaned back in the old-fashioned, tattered easy-chair and yawned.

"No—have you?" and she glanced sideways at him like a bird.

"Till you are my wife," Cheeny said, compressing his lips.

"Then I shall stay here for ever."

The arch, bright hazel eyes met his with quiet resolution.

Cheeny came close to her, leaning his hand upon the table.

"I am going away for a time. You will have a chance to reflect upon the advantage of the offer I have made you, and to contemplate that fate which is the only alternative to marrying me. I advise you, Miss Lorne, to make a study of old Grizzle, for all your choice of a bridegroom lies between him and me."

He bowed low and said "good-morning" politely and left the room without even closing the door.

Perdita was on her feet instantly.

That in hand she followed him to the door of the long, dark passage.

Cheeny opened it without glancing behind him, and let it swing back.

Perdita sprang forward. She meant to at least make an appeal to the driver of the carriage which had brought her, as she believed the vehicle to be still in the courtyard.

But just as her eager foot touched the stone threshold she heard a curious shuffling movement on the flags below, and Grizzle appeared coming up the steps, his red shock of hair seeming to bristle and his wild eyes to glow like flames.

He opened his horrible great mouth and gnashed his great tusks of teeth at her as if he would rend her.

A moment the young girl stood her ground, resolved to speak to the driver, then as the huge, half-savage creature leaped toward her she turned and ran.

CHAPTER XXIX.

"The maid will keep your secret because she is to be well paid for it," Baron Chandos had said to Volney Heath at the Normandy chateau.

"She hates me, and she will tell Talbot Dane anything he asks her and she knows," Heath had replied, drearily.

He was both right and wrong in his gloomy cal-

culations—wrong in supposing that Adèle hated him—right in prophesying that she would tell Lord Dane anything he asked her, if she knew it. But she did the last solely upon the principle that "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush."

Lord Dane laid down his money—the gold—on her coquettish palms, as much as he could pile on both.

He got in return the address Sybil's present maid had innocently furnished, and he had already started for Normandy at about the very time Baron Chandos and Heath were holding that interview which has been narrated in a previous chapter.

Heath, when he broke from Baron Chandos and ran down to the lower hall, found no cause for alarm there. It was only a neighbour upon a trifling errand concerning some rare flowers which Sybil had expressed a desire to see.

Baron Chandos, who had followed closely after Volney, was greatly relieved.

At the first opportunity he advised Volney to make some excuse to his wife, and take her away from Normandy, from France even, and to tell her nothing of the truth at present. He offered the use of a villa of his own which he possessed in the south of Italy, and urged immediate departure. But Heath had at last resolved to do that which should have been done so long before—confess the whole truth to his wife.

His lips whitened and his eyes took a desperate glitter as he announced this resolution, but he stood firm in it. He would flee no more, no farther, not even to avoid arrest as the murderer of Sybil's father.

"I did not kill him," he said, when Baron Chandos showed him how sure he was of conviction if he were arrested and placed in the hands of the law. "I did not kill him, and somehow my innocence will be made known—hereafter if not now."

It was with the utmost difficulty that Baron Chandos persuaded him to postpone telling Sybil all for a single day, in the hope that he might himself receive some news which he was looking for, and which might possibly alter the aspect of affairs materially.

It was only for a day, but it proved the most terrible error Volney Heath had made since his first mistake of marrying his wife under another man's name and dignities. His story was bad enough at the best, and he lost by listening to Baron Chandos the one advantage he might have had in telling it himself.

As Baron Chandos had said, Lord Dane had left England at the same time with himself, and on substantially the same errand, to discover Heath, the supposed murderer of Rupert Vassar.

They reached Paris at nearly the same time.

The baron having knowledge of Dane's errand, but Dane not knowing his, the baron eluded the earl, and, stumbling by an extraordinary chance upon Sybil's ex-maid, obtained the knowledge he wanted of Heath's whereabouts and departed thither.

Dane did not stumble upon the maid, she stumbled upon him.

Adèle, indeed, gathering from Chandos cautiously that there was money to be got out of Dane, hastened to seek him as soon as Chandos was well out of the way, although she had solemnly, and with the utmost appearance of meaning what she said, promised not to tell the earl where Heath was under any circumstances.

She made her bargain with Dane first, named her price and got it.

She had gone to the earl's hotel to see him. She was followed away from there by Cheeny, the earl's confidential man.

Cheeny was bent upon foiling his master in his search for Heath and Sybil—not that he cared to spare Heath, but he dared not let Dane and Heath, or Dane and Sybil, meet for fear of Perdita's identity being discovered.

He calculated that Heath, on receiving warning of what was coming, would flee and seek some new retreat.

The earl knew that Perdita was at Rylands.

Cheeny had contrived to convince him after his return from his fruitless errand to Graystone that there had risen in his absence circumstances which had made it absolutely necessary for him to proceed to such extreme measures as he had done in removing Miss Lorne to that bleak mountain fastness.

Lord Dane had accepted his man's course and reasoning not at all willingly. He was very angry in fact at first when he discovered what had been done.

His whole sensitive and chivalric nature rose against this violence and treachery towards a woman, whatever her station in life or her position towards himself.

He did not succeed in quieting his uneasiness, even by giving Cheeny a fresh cheque, with orders to supply the "the poor little thing" with every luxury money could buy, which it is needless to say the valet had no idea of doing at present.

"The harder lines she has the quicker she'll give in," he thought.

(To be continued.)

WARNED BY THE PLANETS.

CHAPTER XX.

There are some calamities that strike us dumb and powerless, like the lightning shaft. When Lady Strathpey heard her husband's footsteps ringing down the oaken staircase she sank down upon the carpet, and resting her forehead on her folded arms, sat in a stupid, senseless torpor, half unconscious of the great calamity that had befallen her.

In that condition Judith found her when after waiting for hours to be summoned, and unable to repress her anxiety, she entered her lady's room unbidden, and all effort on the girl's part to rouse her proved ineffectual.

In her fright Judith summoned Mrs. Colonel Chelmsleigh, and she in her turn summoned the family physician.

But he shook his head almost as soon as his eyes rested on the white, frost-like face. The disease was beyond his skill, he could do no more than administer a simple stimulant.

But toward night, of her own will, the countess roused up.

Very white and still and silent she remained, but she was clear headed and conscious, and began at once for making her arrangements for leaving at Sevenoaks.

Her husband had cast her off, and she determined to repair at once to her own estate known as Auckland Oaks; she was too proud in her injured innocence to make one effort toward clearing herself in his eyes or regaining his confidence and affection.

"We shall set out early in the morning, Judith," she said, quietly, "and I want you to make all necessary arrangements; that is," she added, with a wan smile, "if you intend to stand by me now in my hour of trial."

The girl burst into tears.

"My dear, dear lady," she sobbed, "how can you neglect me?"

"I do not doubt you, Judith," returned the countess, "I trust you implicitly; you are my one true friend and helper in all the world."

The following morning found everything in readiness.

The countess breakfasted in her own apartments. Her trunks stood out in the hall, her private carriage was ordered.

She had made her explanations to Mrs. Colonel Chelmsleigh, and charged her with the task of excusing her to the few guests still remaining.

Only one more task remained to her before she bid adieu to her husband's home for ever. She must bid adieu to her children. Oh, bitter, bitter task! The poor mother put it off till the very last moment. Her husband had decreed that they should be given to Lady Neville's charge, and they were to go to London that very afternoon, in the care of Lord Strathpey's notary. Her husband was lord and master, and nothing remained for her but to submit and obey.

She crossed the hall with tottering steps and tapped at the nursery door. The Dundas woman opened it.

Lady Pearl and her brother had just finished their breakfast.

"Oh, mamma," cried Pearl, "you are going to London too! I'm so glad! Let's say you were not, but you will go!"

The countess drew her child to her bosom and signed to the nurse to leave the room. She obeyed, with a strange glitter in her dusky eyes.

"Mamma, cannot go to London now," the poor mother began, choking down the aching misery at her heart; "but Lady Pearl shall go, and stay a while with Aunt Neville."

"I don't want to go without you, mamma!"

"But you must, darling! Mamma is obliged to go on a journey now; Brother Angus will go with you, and you will have so many pretty things, and play with Cousin Victoria, and Aunt Neville will be very kind to you."

The child grew somewhat pacified, and the young heir stood passive, his light, opaque eyes expressive of neither one thing nor the other.

The countess arose, feeling that in a few moments her strength and fortitude would give way. She turned to the boy first, and took both of his sallow cheeks in her hands.

"Good-bye, Angus," she said, kissing him repeatedly; "in the years to come you shall suffer no wrong at my hands. Heaven bless you."

The boy received the embrace as he did everything else, with passive indifference. But little Marguerite sobbed, and clung to her mother in passionate grief.

"My darling, may Heaven keep you from harm," murmured the countess.

Then, with one last convulsive embrace, she tore herself away.

She had parted from her children perhaps for ever, yet her step was firm, and her bearing like that of an outraged queen, as she traversed the long corridor, passing the apartments in which her husband and his lawyer sat, the doors double locked.

Judith awaited her in the hall, and the carriage was at the door.

She entered it, and without one backward glance passed out from the grand old manor, and under the branches of the giant oaks, on the way to the home of her childhood—a disgraced and discarded wife!

As she rolled along in the yellow, autumn sunlight a sudden remembrance of that awful morning, when the strange apparition appeared before her, as she sat under the great rock at Strathpey Castle, flashed across her mind.

"You shall be robbed of your titles and grandeur, an outcast, scorned by your husband, and derided by the world!"

"Oh, Heaven," she murmured, "how fearfully the terrible prediction has been fulfilled! What merciless fate is pursuing me? What in all my life have I ever done that this woe and desolation should come upon me?"

In the meantime the Earl of Strathpey was making his final preparations.

Everything had been arranged between him and Colonel Gilbert Vernon, who was then at his sister's residence, only a short distance from Sevenoaks.

The seconds had settled all the preliminaries, and the deadly meeting was to take place on the following morning at sunrise at a spot known as Willow Ridge, a secluded place some seven or eight miles distant.

Lord Strathpey knew well enough that the chances against him were two to one.

His adversary was a cool, strong-nerved man, an old soldier, and a dead shot.

There was but little hope that he would escape with his life. And in view of this state of things he was engaged throughout the day in closing up his earthly accounts and making ready for death and eternity.

And calmly enough he did it, for in that hour Angus, Earl of Strathpey, with all his wealth and honours, was not much in love with life.

He made his will, providing handsomely for his daughter, and leaving everything else to his son and heir, save an annuity to his late countess, and five thousand pounds to be deposited in a bank to the order of Judith Ford. His two children he left in charge of his sister, appointing her husband, Sir Marshall Neville, as guardian and executor.

This done in his silent and desolate home he sat down and waited—waited for the slow hours of the autumn night to wear away, and the morrow to dawn which, in all probability, would make him a murderer in the same moment that it sent his guilty soul into the presence of his Maker.

CHAPTER XXI.

LADY STRATHPEY and Judith, who was her sole attendant, took the first out-going train, and journeyed on as fast as steam could convey them toward Auckland Oaks, in the county of Kent.

A feeling of death-like apathy and despair froze the poor wife's heart as she sat in an obscure corner, her face thickly veiled, living over again every moment of that last terrible scene with her husband.

Not one bitter word, one cruel glance, had she forgotten. But as she recalled them all one sentence struck her with peculiar force.

"The day after to-morrow I will meet your gallant colonel and put a bullet through his heart."

For the first time its true import flashed upon her. Her white cheeks grew whiter, and her breath came in gasps.

Did it mean a duel?

On and on they sped, the golden moon waned, and the dreamy autumn twilight began to fall. She would soon reach the old home of her happy girlhood. But that terrible sentence rang in her ears:

"The day after to-morrow!"

The coming morning would be that day. Only one brief night intervened.

One night, and her husband, dear as her own life-blood still, in spite of all his cruel injustice, might be lying stark and dead on some lonely heath with the stain of murder on his soul.

She arose to her feet with a suppressed shriek.

"Judith," she whispered, in a strange, awed voice, "how far is the next station?"

"Only a little way, my lady," replied the girl, looking up in wonder. "I can see the lights from the windows now."

"We must get out there; I am going back."

"My lady!"

"Hush! Have the baggage sent on, and ask no questions!"

Her deathly white face and wide, horror-filled eyes frightened Judith, and she obeyed in silence. They got off at the little wayside station and waited for the return train.

The autumn night was waning, the stars were growing dim, and far beyond the purple hills the first faint tints of dawn were beginning to glow, when they reached the Fearnth station, up amid the Cumberland hills.

"Engage the first carriage you see," whispered the countess as they got out.

Judith obeyed in wondering silence.

"Drive to The Cedars, the seat of Lady Vernon, and drive for your life," she commanded as the driver closed the carriage door.

The shrill claxon of a cook from some neighbouring farmyard broke the morning silence.

The countess uttered a faint cry.

"Oh, merciful Heaven!" she moaned, "it may be too late! Drive fast!" she cried to the driver; "it is a matter of life and death! Drive fast, and I will double, treble your fee!"

The man sprang to his box and lashed his horses like a madman.

They flew over the dewy English hills like the wind.

The countess sat like a statue, her hands locked, her wide, horror-filled eyes watching the reddening dawn.

At The Cedars everything was as silent as the grave. Lady Vernon's household slept well after their arduous duties. A grand ball masque was to come off in a couple of days, and her ladyship and her attendants had been busy with preparations.

Away up in one chamber of the pleasant English country house a solitary light was burning, as it had burned through the livelong night; and in this chamber sat Colonel Gilbert Vernon, in whose honor all this gaiety and display, which the household had been preparing was to take place.

The colonel had made his will, and written a brief characteristic note to the woman who had engaged to be his wife, and a few lines of instruction and explanation to his sister, who was utterly ignorant of the awful event that was impending.

The rest of his time he devoted to making out a clear and concise statement of all that had transpired between the Countess of Strathpey and himself, in which he fully set forth her purity and innocence. This done, he arose, smoked his inevitable cigar, and glanced out at the reddening dawn.

It was time to set out. He did not care to be late on the field. He descended the stairs with the same serene and sphinx-like face he always wore, and was in the act of letting himself out when a violent rattle at the door-bell startled the entire household. The colonel opened the door and stood face to face with Lady Strathpey.

He divined her errand on the instant, and led her into a small ante-room adjoining, the door of which he locked.

The countess dropped into a seat, breathless and ill from fatigue and excitement. The colonel crossed to the mantelpiece, and poured out a small goblet of wine, which he compelled her to swallow.

"Now, Lady Strathpey," he said as he glanced at his watch, "let me hear what you have to say; I haven't any time to lose."

The countess looked up at his stern, icy face, and her very soul sank within her.

"Colonel Vernon," she said, "you are going to fight a duel with my husband?"

"I am!" was the laconic answer.

"And I have come," she continued, her voice thrilling with agony, "to entreat you to forego your purpose."

"Just what I supposed," replied the officer, buttoning up his coat; "I am truly sorry, madam, but I cannot grant your request; and now if you have nothing more to say I must bid you good-morning!"

He strode towards the door, but the poor woman sprang up and threw herself at his feet.

"Oh, Colonel Vernon," she entreated, raising her imploring eyes to his face, "have pity on me! I am the most miserable creature in the world already, but if this duel takes place I shall go mad! Oh, Colonel Vernon, have pity on me!"

"Madam," questioned the colonel, a little impatiently, "why do you come to me? Why not make your appeal to the Earl of Strathpey?"

"Because," she replied, with an unutterable pathos

in her voice, "because the Earl of Strathpey has cast me off, and forbidden me ever again to come into his presence—he would not hear me, but, Colonel Vernon, he is my husband, and I love him; on my knees I implore you to save him and yourself from the awful crime of murder."

The colonel, despite his cool self-command, was deeply moved. His bearded lip actually trembled as he raised the kneeling countess and placed her in a seat.

"Lady Strathpey," he said, "this is very painful—I wish you had not sought this interview. I cannot grant your request. Your husband insulted me, then challenged me to fight him; at this moment he awaits me, and you come here to ask me to back out and brand myself a coward!"

"Not a coward, Colonel Vernon," she cried; "a Christian—a man so noble and brave that he dares defy the pitiful estimate of men, dares do what is right for the sake of his own soul, for the sake of a miserable, heartbroken woman! Colonel Vernon, have mercy! In the years to come, when you have a wife of your own, it will be a bitter drop in your cup of happiness to remember that you took my husband's life and sent me to a suicide's grave! For your own sake, for my poor husband's sake, for the sake of my little children, have mercy!"

She threw herself at his feet again, clasping his knees and raising her streaming eyes to his face. He shook her off almost roughly, his face growing white and rigid.

"Great Heaven!" he burst out, "I'd sooner be shot a dozen times than endure this. Let me alone, madam—I must go!"

He strode past her, and, unlocking the door, hurried out.

The dawn of day was in its glory! The East was one blaze of gold, all the hill tops were crowned with purple mist, and the sweet, fresh air alive with rejoicing melody!

Something in this sweet and solemn beauty, in the twitter of the birds, the bleating of the folded lambs, the breath of the opening blossoms—some subtle influence—touched this cold, cynical, worldly man's heart, and he stood still on the steps, gazing solemnly around him. For the last time, perhaps! In another hour his soul might be in eternity!

A faint, gasping sob from the poor woman within reached his ear—the woman he had loved so in the days of his impetuous youth. He turned sharply on his heel, setting his white teeth hard beneath his moustache.

This Indian colonel was a brave man, but never in his life had such sublime courage inspired him as at that moment.

He strode back, and into the ante-room, where the countess still knelt, her face hidden in her hands.

"Lady Strathpey," he said, curtly, "I'll not fight your husband!"

The countess sprang up with a cry of joy, and began to pour forth her thanks and blessings, but before she could utter a word the colonel had gone.

And, while she and Judith were being driven back to Penrith Station to make a fresh start for Auckland Oaks, away out on the borders of the Severn-estuary, in a secluded bottom known as Willow Ridge, a solemn group was gathered.

It was composed of the Earl of Strathpey and his two seconds, who were Colonel Chudleigh and a young Guardsman named Putney, and two gentlemen, the seconds of Colonel Vernon.

Everything was in readiness—the spot selected, the distance paced off, all the horrible preliminaries arranged; and, pistol in hand, the haggard earl stood, in the solemn hush of dawn, eager to stain his soul with the awful crime of murder.

The birds began to twitter amid the willow boughs, the golden light broadened and deepened, and presently, above the purple peaks of the Cumberland hills appeared the glittering rim of the rising sun. But Colonel Gilbert Vernon did not come.

The earl strode up and down, gazing at his moustache in his fiery impatience, and one of the colonel's seconds mounted his horse and rode off to ascertain the cause of his delay.

In a short space of time he galloped back, bringing the startling news that Colonel Gilbert Vernon declined to fight.

"Scoundrel!" muttered the earl, white with disappointed rage, "he's a sneak and a coward, and I'll shoot him down at sight, like a dog."

"I don't know," mused Colonel Chudleigh; "I'm inclined to think it required more courage on Vernon's part to give up this duel than to fight it."

CHAPTER XXII.

At first, as is always the case, there was a wondrous commotion over this scandal in high life.

The affair was discussed from the Scottish border to the Land's End, for the Earl of Strathpey was a noted man; it filled the public journals, and consti-

tuted the topic for all the tea-drinkings for a month afterwards.

As a matter of course, public sympathy went with the earl. A peer could not possibly be in the wrong! It must be his wife, his fair, weak wife! "Frailty, thy name is woman!"

Lady Neville took the matter in hand, and soon promulgated the popular theory. Whatever Lady Neville did was popular.

"Poor Angus!" she said, referring to the earl, "his domestic afflictions were so severe! He was a man to be pitied! His countess was insane! That was the secret. There was a taint of madness in the Auckland blood—she warned the earl of it before he married her."

Whoever could have dreamed of such a romance as that shepherd boy in the Tyrol being Lord Strathpey's son but a maniac?

The earl believed the boy to be her own child, born before their marriage; Lady Neville did not know about that. There was a diversity of opinion relative to the child's age. But the countess had acted shamefully, and was not to be trusted in anything!

Lord Strathpey intended taking immediate steps for a divorce, and she hoped it would be all over and forgotten before the children were old enough to comprehend the matter. She intended to bring them up in utter ignorance of their poor, insane mother!

This was the popular belief, and the credulous British public allowed it without making a question.

Meanwhile Lord Strathpey, hoping to drown some of his bitter anguish, took himself off to foreign lands, leaving the divorce, and his children, and everything else to take care of themselves, or to be taken care of by his capable relatives, the Nevilles.

His countess settled down very quietly in her old home at Auckland Oaks with Judith as companion, and some old and devoted retainers who had served her dead father.

Very few friends, apart from those who had once flattered and brilliant countess. Public opinion was almost unanimously against her.

Even her lawyer, Sir Henry Galloway, into whose hands she submitted the case of her little boy in the Tyrol, even he, while he took the case in hand, and determined to make the best he could of it, looked upon the whole thing as a supreme bit of nonsense, and upon his client, herself as a weak, addle-brained lunatic who would be much safer lodged in a mad-house.

Only one of her former friends stood by her in her fallen fortune. This one was old Doctor Reufrew. He made his way down to Auckland Oaks to pay her a consolatory visit.

The old Scotchman had a keen brain, and was intensely practical in his shrewd common sense, yet, singularly enough, he believed every word of the strange story concerning the Tyrol lad on the first hearing. And he went down to Auckland Oaks to offer his old patient his aid and consolation.

Meanwhile Judith—faithful and devoted to her unfortunate lady—had her own sorrows. The five thousand pounds, which were to have been her marriage dowry, lay snugly in the bank awaiting her order; and she had in addition a nice little sum saved from her monthly wages—enough, as she told herself, to put Hendrick and herself far beyond the reach of want; but Hendrick did not come.

For months the "Victoria," the ship in which he had sailed, had been due, yet he did not come. Now every newspaper that the anxious girl took up contained some item in reference to the expected steamer; one week she had been seen off this place, and the next week off the other, but at last the true intelligence came.

Judith read it one morning sitting in the pretty breakfast-room at Auckland Oaks.

"Lost at Sea" in ominous capitals headed the column of marine intelligence; and the simple account followed.

The truth had been got at in regard to the missing steamer "Victoria." She was burned in the Chinese waters, and not one of her crew escaped—not one!

In Judith Ford's heart as she read these last words the hope that had been so very dear to her died out. She was a quiet, self-repressed girl, but her affections were very deep, and she loved this sailor lover as few women love.

She uttered a dry sob. The countess, musing before the fire, heard it and looked up. The girl's blank, hopeless face startled her.

"What is it, Judith?" she asked.

Judith crossed to where she sat, with the paper in her hand and her finger on the paragraph.

"The 'Victoria' is lost, for sure," she said, "and Hendrick's gone."

There was an indescribable pathos in her quiet voice.

Lady Strathpey's eyes filled with tears as she glanced over the item. She put out her arm and drew the girl to her side.

Overcome by her lady's kindness, Judith dropped on her knees and rested her head on her shoulder, weeping quiet but bitter tears.

The countess stroked her brown hair caressingly. "Poor Judith—good, faithful Judith," she said; "if it is true we shall be nearer and dearer friends than ever, friends in the sacred bonds of sorrow."

And it was true!

The "Victoria" never returned, and Hendrick was gone.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE London season set in, and Lady Cecilia Drummond and her circle of gay admirers took flight from Cavendish Manor and opened the baronet's town house in Grosvenor Square.

The baronet was quite bountifully supplied with wealth, otherwise he never would have been my lady Cecilia's husband; and the appointments of his town house were very magnificent.

Lady Drummond and Lady Neville were the best of friends. Their elegant mansions were in the same locality, and they met continually at the fashionable assemblies which both frequented.

It was at Lady Drummond's first ball of the season that their first meeting, after the separation of the earl and his wife took place.

A very charming affair was this ball, got up on the very grandest scale, and attended by the very *crème de la crème* of West End society.

Lady Drummond was the queen of hosts, and her entertainments were always largely attended. The spacious drawing-rooms were filled with beauty and splendour on this, her first night. Costly silks, priceless jewels, and sweet-scented blossoms, glittered and glowed in the light of the swinging chandelier, and over all floated the bewitching sound of exquisite music.

She did the honours in the most approved manner. She seemed ubiquitous in her graceful attentions—smiling radiantly on one,—poking a pleasant word to another, and breaking hearts at random with the glances of her glorious eyes. She danced and sang, and fairly outdid herself in the way of being charming; yet never perhaps in all her life before had the fair Cecilia felt more despondent.

When the ball was fairly under way, and every one was being amused and entertained, she stole out from the crowded drawing-rooms into the dim, cool silence of the conservatory. This she entered, and, closing the door after her, she threw herself into the rustic seat with a sigh of relief.

Lady Drummond had looked for the Earl of Strathpey at her ball that night.

"He can come in a quiet way," she wrote in her note of invitation to Lady Neville. "It will do the poor man good to mingle with his friends; and where is the impropriety?"

But instead of availing himself of this invitation, and attending the ball in a quiet way, this provoking peer had taken himself off to Sicily for the winter.

Lady Cecilia sat down and pushed back the heavy braids from her forehead, her dark brows corrugated with vexation.

"Gone to Sicily," she soliloquized; "gone, and I counted so much on having him here! Of all provoking men Angus, Earl of Strathpey, is most provoking! But I'll have my revenge yet! I will!"

She set her white teeth and locked her jewelled hands in fierce determination.

She seemed to be back again in that far-away morning of youth and hope. How happy she was! How beautiful she was; and how she loved him!

This very provoking man, Angus, Earl of Strathpey—how she loved him in his manly, Saxon strength, with the honours of all his race descending to him alone, the last Strathpey in all the world. How he thrilled her with the glances of his handsome eyes, and won her with the flatteries of his honeyed tongue!

How he called her his own, his bride, his countess; then, at the very last, when she almost felt the coronet upon her brow, cast her off, and, at his father's bidding, wedded another; and that other the one woman in all the world whom she most hated—Marguerite, daughter of Sir Roland Auckland, heiress of Auckland Oaks.

But for this Marguerite, this blue-eyed Pearl of Kent, as she was called, through some kindredship on the father's side, the baronetcy of Auckland, together with the old chateau in France, and all the Auckland moneys would have descended to Cecilia Cavendish of Cavendish Manor.

But the blue-eyed Pearl of Kent lived and thrived, and the Lord of Strathpey Castle went down and wedded her.



[A WIFE'S APPEAL.]

And she, grand-niece of a duke, with all her haughty pride and queenly beauty, was left forsaken in her dreary old manor house with scarcely a pound of ready cash.

Thinking it all over, her dark cheeks flamed and a baleful light blazed in her black eyes. Nothing short of a complete revenge would ever cancel that bitter wrong—that terrible humiliation. Angus of Strathspey had blighted her life, and left her to marry an imbecile old baronet for the sake of his gold and title; and as surely would she blight his and bring his proud head down in dust at her feet.

Sitting in the dim light of the conservatory, with the gorgeous blooms around her, this woman looked the impersonation of a beautiful fiend in her costly robes and jewels—her rare face distorted by the most malignant passions the human heart ever knows.

A rustle of silken drapery in the adjoining apartment startled her. It was Lady Neville, who came in to look at the flowers and get a breath of fresh air—a proud and regal woman, very like the earl, her brother.

She plucked a cluster of heliotrope and sat down, inhaling its fragrance.

Lady Drummond arose on the instant and hurried out.

"My dear Lady Neville," she said, sinking down on an opposite seat, "I beg your pardon! I was choking with the heat, and ran in here! I hope it is not growing tedious in the drawing-rooms?"

"Oh, dear no," replied Lady Neville as she fastened the heliotrope in the lace on her bosom; "I never saw a more successful ball—your balls are always successful, Lady Drummond!"

"Are they, my dear Lady Neville? If you say so I'm content. But I beg your pardon, I fancy you look a trifle paler than usual. Are you quite well?"

"No, not entirely well; I felt just the least faint when I left the ball-room."

Lady Drummond caught up a little silver bell and tinkled it. In an instant a page stood beside her.

"A bottle of port," she said, "and glasses."

"Delightful old port, Lady Neville," she explained as the page returned with the requisite articles on a silver tray; "Sir Varney pronounces it unsurpassed. Just one glass; 'twill run through your veins like fire."

She poured out a couple of glasses, drinking one herself, while Lady Neville sipped the other.

"I've not been myself," said the latter, "for a week or two, indeed not since that sad affair of the earl's."

Lady Drummond nodded sympathetically.

"'Tis a terrible affliction," continued Lady Neville, putting down her glass, her blonde cheek flushing from the effects of the wine. "I can't bear to think of it. Poor Angus is bitterly humiliated! But he deserves it. He should never have married an Aukland!"

"I beg your pardon, Lady Neville," smoothly put in Lady Cecilia, "but the taint of insanity is not in the Aukland blood, it comes from the mother's side; your brother's wife's mother was a Rowland, and the taint comes from the Rowland blood."

"Does it, indeed? Oh, dear me, I really beg your pardon, my dear, dear Lady Drummond, and I did not think—You are connected with the Auklands, are you not?"

"Remotely," replied Lady Drummond, with a repressed flash in her eyes; "don't distress yourself, my dear friend. I'm not a bit offended. I'm quite sure I do not inherit the family taint."

"Well, the Auklands are a fine family," continued Lady Neville, "and poor, dear papa was eager for the match. Indeed, he commanded it, I believe. Angus had got into some entanglement, and poor papa wanted him to marry. But dear mamma and I warned them of this very thing. And now it has broken out! So sad for a man like Angus, so young and with such a career before him. He's completely broken down; no heart or spirit for anything."

"Does he contemplate getting a divorce?" asked Lady Cecilia, pressing one hand against her heart to still its fierce throbbings.

"He did at first—or rather we persuaded him to do so. But he has changed his mind again—he says he won't suffer the disgraceful affair to be dragged before the public. You see," continued her ladyship, "he believes his wife to be guilty of criminal conduct. I do not like to speak of it, but you are a dear friend. All that story of the child, you know, which the countess fancied was her own, and insisted that the earl should acknowledge—I believe it all to be nonsense, the vagaries of a maniac's brain; but Angus," she whispered, lowering her head and speaking confidentially, "believes the boy is her own, born before her marriage!"

"Really! Where is the boy?" questioned Lady Drummond, eagerly.

"I scarcely know—somewhere in the Tyrol, I think. Oh, 'tis just the most absurd thing! A poor peasant's child, which she chanced to fancy!"

Lady Cecilia's eyes gleamed like those of a panther about to spring.

"I wonder," she suggested, cautiously, "if she, the countess I mean, could have connived at the ab-

duction of her own babe in order that this child might supplant him?"

"'Tis horrible to think of, but Angus believes it."

"He does? Poor man, how I pity him," Lady Drummond said, her eyes gleaming with a wicked triumph; "it will be bad to have it all dragged before the public, for her children's sake. If I were concerned I should stop it."

"We are trying to do so. Sir Marshall has seen Galloway, and requested him not to take her case in hand. She is taking steps to have the child's rights, as she fancies them, established."

Lady Drummond laughed a peculiar rippling peal.

"Dear me," she said; "if I were the Earl of Strathspey, and that woman's husband, though she's my cousin in a remote degree, how effectually I would stop all this scandal!"

"How?" questioned Lady Neville.

"How? Simply enough! I would exercise a husband's authority, and shut her up in a mad-house, where she could not harm herself or others."

Lady Neville started. Clever as she was, she had never dreamed of this, and it appeared so easy, and not at all wrong and cruel. She was an intensely proud woman, and this was such an effectual way of hushing up the scandal. If the earl were only in England!

Lady Drummond watched her keenly, and saw that her arrow had struck home, as she intended it should.

"And the dear little children?" she asked, "how are they?"

"Oh, quite well; only Lady Pearl grieves for her mother. Angus is a perfect stoic."

"He's like the Strathspeys, isn't he?"

"Well, yes, I suppose so, at least he will be as he matures."

"I thought the likeness very striking, as I remember him," said Lady Drummond, with a most wicked smile. "Poor little things, it is so sad, but the very best have their troubles; it will all blow over in a little while. Don't worry yourself ill, dear Lady Neville."

"I'll try to avoid that," replied her ladyship as she arose; "and now I suppose it is our duty, or your duty rather, to return to the drawing-rooms. But really I am in no mood for gaiety; and, dearest Lady Drummond, if you'll allow me, I think I'll order my carriage and drive home."

Lady Drummond was deeply grieved, of course, yet she yielded her consent, and the sister of Lord Strathspey departed, her brain filled with the new purpose that her friend's words had suggested.

(To be continued.)



[ROBERT'S FIRST FARE.]

ROBERT RUSHTON'S DESTINY.

CHAPTER IV.

Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just,
And he but naked though locked up in steel
Whose conscience with injustice is corrupted.

2 Henry VI.

MR. DAVIS sat at an office table writing a letter. He did not at first look up, but kept on with his employment.

He had some remnants of conscience left, and he shrank from the task his wife had devolved upon him.

"Mr. Baker tells me you wish to see me, Mr. Davis," said Robert, who had advanced into the office, by way of calling his attention.

"Yes," said Mr. Davis, laying down his pen, and turning half round; "I hear a bad account of you, Rushton."

"In what way, sir?" asked our hero, returning his look fearlessly.

"I hear that you have been behaving like a young ruffian," said Mr. Davis, who felt that he must make out a strong case to justify him in dismissing Robert from the factory.

"This is a serious charge, Mr. Davis," said Robert, gravely; "and I hope you will be kind enough to let me know what I have done, and the name of my accuser."

"I mean to do so. Probably it will be enough to say that your accuser is my son, Halbert."

"I supposed so. I had a difficulty with Halbert yesterday, but I consider he was in fault."

"He says you insulted and struck him."

"I did not insult him. The insult came from him."

"Did you strike him?"

"Yes; but not until he had struck me first."

"He didn't mention this; but even if he had you should not have struck him back."

"Why not?" asked Robert.

"You should have reported the affair to me."

"And allowed him to keep on striking me?"

"You must have said something to provoke him," continued Mr. Davis, finding it a little difficult to answer this question, "or he would not have done it."

"If you will allow me," said Robert, "I will give you an account of the whole affair."

"Go on," said Mr. Davis, rather unwillingly, for he strongly suspected that our hero would be able to justify himself, and so render dismissal more difficult.

"Halbert took offence because I accompanied Hester Paine home the evening before last, though I did it with the young lady's permission, as he

knew. He met me yesterday at twelve o'clock as I was going home to dinner, and undertook to lecture me on my presumption in offering my escort to one so much above me. He also taunted me with being a factory boy. I told him to keep his advice to himself, as I should not ask his permission when I wanted to walk with Hester Paine. Then he became enraged, and struck me with his cane. I took it from him and returned the blow, breaking the cane in doing it."

"Ahem!" said Mr. Davis, clearing his throat; "you must have been very violent."

"I don't think I was, sir. I struck a smart blow, but the cane was very light and easily broken."

"You were certainly very violent," continued Mr. Davis, resolved to make a point of this. "Halbert did not break the cane when he struck you."

"He struck the first blow."

"That does not alter the question of the amount of violence, which was evidently without justification. You must have been in a great passion."

"I don't think I was in any greater passion than Halbert."

"In view of the violence you made use of I consider that you owe my son an apology."

"An apology!" repeated Robert, whose astonishment was apparent in his tone.

"I believe I spoke plainly," said Mr. Davis, irritably.

"If any apology is to be made," said our hero, firmly, "it ought to come from Halbert to me."

"How do you make that out?"

"He gave me some impertinent advice, and because I did not care to take it he struck me."

"You seized his cane in a fury, and broke it in returning the blow."

"I acknowledge that I broke the cane," said Robert; "and I suppose it is only right that I should pay for it. I am willing to do that, but not to apologize."

"That will not be sufficient," said Mr. Davis, who knew that payment for the cane would fall far short of satisfying his wife or Halbert. "The cost of the cane was a trifle, and I am willing to buy him another, but I cannot consent that my son should be subjected to such rude violence without an apology from the offender. If I passed this over you might attack him again to-morrow."

"I am not in the habit of attacking others without cause," said Robert, proudly. "If Halbert will let me alone, or treat me with civility, he may be sure that I shall not trouble him."

"You are evading the main point, Rushton," said Mr. Davis. "I have required you to apologize to my son, and I ask you for the last time whether you propose to comply with my wishes?"

"No, sir," said Robert, boldly.

"Do you know to whom you are speaking, boy?"

"Yes, sir."

"I am not only the father of the boy you have assaulted, but I am also the manager of this factory, and your employer."

"I am aware of that, sir."

"I can discharge you from the factory."

"I know you can," said Robert.

"Of course I should be sorry to resort to such an extreme measure, but if you defy my authority I may be compelled to do so."

So the crisis had come. Robert saw that he must choose between losing his place and making a humiliating apology. Between the two he did not for a moment hesitate.

"Mr. Davis," he said, boldly and firmly, "it will be a serious thing for me if I lose my place here, for my mother and I are poor, and my wages constitute the greatest part of our income. But I cannot make this apology you require. I would sooner lose my place."

The bold and manly bearing of our hero, and his resolute tone, impressed Mr. Davis with an involuntary admiration. He felt that Robert was a boy to be proud of, but none the less he meant to carry out his purpose.

"Is this your final decision?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Then you are discharged from the factory. You will report your discharge to Mr. Baker, and he will pay you what you have earned this week."

"Very well, sir."

Robert left the office with a bold bearing but a heart full of trouble. If only himself had been involved in the calamity he could have borne it better, but he knew that his loss of place meant privation and want for his mother unless he could find something to do that would bring in an equal income, and this he did not expect.

"Mr. Baker," he said, addressing the foreman of his room, on his return from Mr. Davis's office, "I am discharged."

"Discharged?" repeated the foreman, in surprise.

"There must be some mistake about this. You are one of our best hands; for your age, I mean."

"There is no dissatisfaction with my work that I know of, but I got into a quarrel with Halbert Davis yesterday, and his father wants me to apologize to him."

"Which you won't do?"

"I would if I felt that I was in fault. I am not too proud for that. But the fact is Halbert ought to apologize to me."

"Halbert is a mean boy. I don't blame you in the least."

"So I am to report my discharge to you and ask you for my wages."

This account was soon settled, and Robert left the factory his own master. But it is poor consolation to be one's own master under such circumstances. Our hero, though he was not unworthy of the designation, dreaded to break the news to his mother, for he knew that it would distress her.

He was slowly walking along when he once more encountered Halbert Davis. Halbert was out for the express purpose of meeting and exulting over him, for he rightly concluded that Robert would decline to apologise to him. Robert saw his enemy and guessed his object, but resolved to say nothing to him unless actually obliged to do so.

"Where are you going?" demanded Halbert.

"Home."

"I thought you worked in the factory?"

"Did you?" asked Robert, looking full in his face and reading the exultation he did not attempt to conceal.

"Perhaps you have got turned out?" suggested Halbert, with a malicious smile.

"You would be glad of that, I suppose," said our hero.

"I don't think I should cry much," said Halbert.

"It's true then, is it?"

"Yes; it's true."

"You won't put on so many airs when you go about begging for cold victuals. I'll be some time before you walk with Hester Paine again."

"I shall probably walk with her sooner than you will."

"She won't notice a beggar."

"There is not much chance of my becoming a beggar, Halbert Davis; but I would rather be one than be as mean as you. I will drop you a slight hint, which you had better bear in mind. It won't be any wonder to insult me now than it was yesterday. I don't lose my place a second time."

Halbert instinctively moved aside while our hero passed on without taking farther notice of him.

"I hate him!" Halbert muttered to himself. "I hope he won't find anything to do. If he wasn't so strong I'd give him a thrashing."

CHAPTER V.

The foolish have an itching to deride, But vain would be upon the laughing side.

GRAT was the dismay of Mrs. Rushton when she heard from Robert that he was discharged from the factory. She was a timid woman, and rather apt to take desponding views of the future.

"Oh, Robert, what is going to become of us?" she exclaimed, fearfully. "We have only two pounds in the house, and you know how little I can earn by braiding straw. I really think you were too hasty and impetuous."

"Don't be alarmed, my dear mother," said Robert, soothingly. "I am sorry I have lost my place, but there are other things I can do besides working in the factory. We are not going to starve yet."

"But suppose you can't find any work?" said his mother.

"Then I'll help you braid straw," said Robert, laughing. "Don't you think I might learn after a while?"

"I don't know but you might," said Mrs. Rushton, dubiously; "but the pay is very poor."

"So it is, mother. I shan't take to braiding straw except as a last resort."

"Wouldn't Mr. Davis take you back into the factory if I went to him and told him how much we needed the money?"

"Don't think of such a thing, mother," said Robert, hastily, his brown cheek flushing. "I am too proud to beg to be taken back."

"But it wouldn't be you."

"I would sooner ask myself than have you do it, mother. No, no; Mr. Davis sent me away for no good reason, and he must come and ask me to return before I'll do it."

"I am afraid you are proud, Robert."

"So I am, mother; but mine is an honest pride. Have faith in me for a week, mother, and see if I don't earn something in that time. I don't expect to make up what I earned at the factory; but I'll earn something, you may depend upon that. Now how would you like to have some fish for supper?"

"I think I should like it. It is a good while since we had any."

"Then I'll tell you what—I'll borrow Will Paine's boat if he'll let me have it, and see if I can't catch a few."

"When will you be home, Robert?"

"It will depend on my success in fishing. It'll be half-past nine, very likely, before I get fairly started, so I think I'd better take my dinner with me. I'll be home some time in the afternoon."

"I hope you'll be careful, Robert. You might get upset."

"I'll take care of that, mother—besides, I can swim like a duck."

Robert went out into the garden and dug some worms for bait.

Meanwhile his mother made a couple of sandwiches, and wrapped them in a paper for his lunch.

Provided thus he walked quickly to the house of Squire Paine, and rang the bell.

"Is Will home?" he asked.

"Here I am, old fellow," was heard from the head of the stairs, and William Paine, a boy of our hero's size and age, appeared. "Come up."

Robert complied with the invitation.

"How do you happen to be at leisure?" his friend asked. "I supposed you were at the factory."

"I'm turned off."

"Turned off! How's that?"

"Through the influence of Halbert Davis."

"Halbert is a disgusting sneak. I always despised him, and if he's done such a mean thing I'll never speak to him again. Tell me all about it."

This Robert did, necessarily bringing in Hester's name.

"He needn't think my sister will walk with him," said Will. "If she does I'll never forgive her. She'd rather walk with you any day."

Robert blushed a little, for, though he was too young to be in love, he thought his friend's sister the most attractive girl he had ever seen, and, knowing how she was regarded in the village, he naturally felt proud of her preference for himself over a boy who was much richer.

"What are you going to do now?" asked Will, with interest.

"The first thing I am going to do is to catch some fish if you'll lend me your boat."

"Lend you my boat? Of course I will. I'll lend it to you for the next three months."

"But you'll want it yourself."

"No. Haven't you heard the news? I'm going to boarding-school."

"You are?"

"It's a fact. I'm packing my trunk now. Come upstairs and superintend the operation."

"I can't stay long. But, Will, are you in earnest about the boat?"

"To be sure I am. I intended to ask you if you'd take care of it for me. You see I can't carry it with me, and you are the only fellow I am willing to lend it to."

"I shall be very glad of the chance, Will. I've been wanting a boat for a long time, but there wasn't much chance of my getting one. Now I shall feel rich. But isn't this a sudden idea—your going to school?"

"Rather. There was a college class-mate of father's here last week, who's at the head of such a school, and he made father promise to send me; so I'm to start to-morrow morning. If it wasn't for that, and being up to my ears in getting ready, I'd go out fishing with you."

"I wish you could."

"I must wait till vacation. Here is the boat key."

Robert took the key with satisfaction. The boat owned by his friend was a staunch, well-built boat, of considerable size, bought only two months before—quite the best boat on the river. It was to be at his free disposal, and this was nearly the same thing as owning it.

He might find it very useful, for it occurred to him that if he could find nothing better to do he could catch fish every day and sell at the village market such as his mother could not use. In this way he would be earning something, and it would be better than being idle.

He knew where the boat was usually kept—just at the foot of a large tree, whose branches drooped over the river.

He made his way thither, and, fitting the key in the padlock which confined the boat, soon set it free.

The sculls he had brought with him from his friend's house.

Throwing in the sculls, he jumped in, and began to push off, when he heard himself called, and looking up saw Halbert Davis standing on the bank.

"Get out of that boat," said Halbert.

"What do you mean?" demanded Robert.

"You have no business in that boat. It doesn't belong to you."

"You'd better mind your own business, Halbert Davis. You have nothing to do with the boat."

"It's William Paine's boat."

"Thank you for the information. I supposed it was yours from the interest you seem to take in it."

"It will be. He's going to let me have it while he's away at school."

"Indeed! did he tell you so?"

"I haven't asked him yet; but I know he will let me have it."

"I don't think he will."

"Why not?"

"If you ever want to borrow this boat you'll have to apply to me."

"You haven't bought it?" asked Halbert, in surprise. "You're too poor."

"I'm to have charge of the boat while Will Paine is away."

"Did he say you might?" asked Halbert, in a tone of disappointment and mortification.

"Of course he did."

"I don't believe it," said Halbert, suspiciously.

"I don't care what you believe. Go and ask him yourself if you are not satisfied, and don't meddle with what is none of your business."

"You're an impudent rascal."

"Have you got another cane you'd like to have broken?" asked Robert, significantly.

Perhaps it would have been as well to have omitted this taunt, but it must be admitted that he had some provocation.

Halbert looked after him enviously as he rowed the boat out into the stream. He had asked his father to buy him a boat, but Mr. Davis's speculations had not turned out very well of late, and he had been deaf to his son's persuasions, backed though they were by his mother's influence.

When Halbert heard that William Paine was going to boarding-school he decided to ask him for the loan of his boat during his absence as the next best thing. Now it seemed that he had been forestalled, and by the boy he hated. He resolved to see young Paine himself, and offer him ten shillings for the use of his boat during the coming term. Then he would have the double satisfaction of using the boat and disappointing Robert.

He made his way to the house of Squire Paine, and after a brief pause was admitted. He was shown into the parlour, and Will Paine came down to see him.

"How are you, Davis?" he said, nodding coolly, but not offering his hand.

"I hear you are going to boarding-school?"

"Yes; I go to-morrow."

"I suppose you won't take your boat with you?"

"No."

"I'll give you ten shillings for the use of it the next three months?"

"I can't accept your offer; Robert Rushton is to have it."

"But he doesn't pay you anything for it. I'll give you fifteen shillings."

"You can't have it for fifteen shillings or fifty. I have promised it to my friend Robert Rushton, and I shall not take it back."

"You may not know," said Halbert, maliciously, "that your friend was discharged from the factory this morning for misconduct?"

"I know very well that he was discharged, and through whose influence, Halbert Davis," said Will, pointedly. "I like him all the better for his misfortune, and so I am sure will my sister."

Halbert's face betrayed the anger and jealousy he felt, but he didn't dare to speak to the lawyer's son as he had to the factory boy.

"Good-morning!" he said, rising to do.

"Good-morning!" said young Paine, formally. Halbert felt as he walked homeward that his triumph over Robert was by no means complete.

CHAPTER VI.

Heaven helps them that help themselves.

Franklin.

ROBERT, though not a professional fisherman, was not wholly inexperienced.

This morning he was extremely lucky, catching quite a fine lot of fish—as much, indeed, as his mother and himself would require as a week to dispose of. However, he did not intend to carry them all home. It occurred to him that he could sell them to a shopkeeper in the village market. Otherwise he would not have cared to go on destroying life for no useful end.

Accordingly on reaching the shore he strung the fish and walked homeward by way of the market. It was rather a heavy tug, for the fishes he had caught weighed at least fifty pounds.

Stepping into the shop he attracted the attention of the proprietor.

"That's a fine lot of fish you have there, Robert. What are you going to do with them?"

"I'm going to sell most of them to you if I can."

"Are they just out of the water?"

"Yes; I have just brought them in."

"What do you want for them?"

"I don't know what is a fair price."

"I'll give you a penny a pound for as many as you want to sell."

"All right," said our hero, with satisfaction. "I'll carry this one home and you can weigh the rest."

The rest proved to weigh forty-five pounds.

The market man handed Robert three shillings and nine pence, which he pocketed with satisfaction.

"Shall you want some more to-morrow?" he asked.

"Yes, if you can let me have them earlier. But how is it you are not at the factory?"

"I've lost my place."

"That's a pity."

"So I have plenty of time to work for you."

"I may be able to take a large quantity from you."

"I'm thinking of running a cart to Brampton every morning, but I must have the fish by eight o'clock or it'll be too late."

"I'll go out early in the morning then."

"Very well; bring me what you have at that hour," said the fishmonger.

"I've got something to do so quick," thought Robert, with satisfaction. "It was a lucky thought asking Will Paine for his boat. I'm sorry he's going away, but it happens just right for me."

Mrs. Rushton was sitting at her work in rather a disconsolate frame of mind. The more she thought of Robert losing his place the more unfortunate it seemed.

She could not be expected to be as sanguine and hopeful as our hero, who was blessed with strong hands and a fund of energy and self-reliance which he inherited from his father.

His mother, on the other hand, was delicate and weak nerved, apt to look on the dark side of things. But notwithstanding this she was a good mother, and Robert loved her.

Nothing had been heard for some time but the drowsy ticking of the clock, when a noise was heard at the door, and Robert entered the room, bringing the fish he had reserved.

"You see, mother, we are not likely to starve," he said.

"That's a fine large fish," said his mother.

"Yes, it'll be enough for two meals. Didn't I tell you, mother, I would find something to do?"

"True, Robert," said his mother, dubiously; "but we shall get tired of fish if we have it every day."

Robert laughed.

"Six days in the week will do for fish, mother," he said. "I think we shall be able to afford something else on Sundays."

"Of course fish is better than nothing," said his mother, who understood him literally; "and I suppose we ought to be thankful to get that."

"You don't look very much pleased at the prospect of fish six times a week," said Robert, laughing again. "On the whole I think it will be better to say twice."

"But what shall we do on other days, Robert?"

"What we have always done, mother—eat something else. But I won't keep you longer in suspense. Did you think this was the only fish I caught?"

"Yes, I thought so."

"I sold forty-five pounds on my way home to Minturn in the market—forty-five pounds at a penny a pound. What do you think of that?"

"Do you mean that you have earned so much as that to-day, Robert?"

"Yes, and here's the money."

"That's much better than I expected," said Mrs. Rushton, looking several degrees more cheerful.

"I don't expect to do as well as that every day, mother, but I don't believe we'll starve. Minturn has engaged me to supply him with fish every day, only some days the fishes won't feel like coming out of the water. Then I forgot to tell you, I'm to have Will Paine's boat for nothing. He's going to board-school, and has asked me to take care of it for him."

"You are fortunate, Robert."

"I am hungry, too, mother. Those two sandwiches didn't go a great way. So if you can just as well as not have supper a little earlier it would suit me."

"I'll put on the tea-kettle at once, Robert," said his mother, rising. "Would you like some of the fish for supper?"

"It wouldn't be too much trouble."

"Surely not, Robert."

The usual supper hour was at five in this country household, but a little after four the table was set, and mother and son sat down to a meal which both enjoyed. The fish proved to be excellent, and Robert enjoyed it the more, first because he caught it himself, and next because he felt that his independent stand at the factory, though it had lost him his place, was not likely to subject his mother to the privations he had feared.

"I'll take another piece of fish, mother," said Robert, passing his plate. "I think on the whole I shan't be obliged to learn to braid straw."

"No; you can do better at fishing."

"Only," added Robert, with mock seriousness, "we ought change works sometimes, mother; I will stay at home and braid straw; and you can go out fishing."

"I am afraid I should make a poor hand at it," said Mrs. Rushton, smiling.

"If Halbert Davis could look in upon us just now he would be disappointed to find us so cheerful after my losing my place at the factory. However, I've disappointed him in another way."

"How is that?"

"He expected Will Paine would lend him his boat while he was gone, but instead of that he finds it promised to me."

"I am afraid he is not a very kind-hearted boy."

"That's drawing it altogether too mild, mother. He's the meanest fellow I ever met. However, I won't talk about him any more, or it'll spoil my appetite."

On the next two mornings Robert went out at five o'clock, in order to get home in time for the market waggon.

He met with fair luck, but not as good as on the first day.

Taking the two mornings together, he captured and sold seventy pounds of fish, which, as the price remained the same, brought him in five shillings and tenpence.

This was not equal to his wages at the factory, still he had the greater part of the day to himself; only unfortunately he had no way of turning his time profitably to account, or at least none had thus far occurred to him.

On the morning succeeding he was out of luck. He caught but two fish, and they were so small that he decided not to offer them for sale.

"If I don't do better than this," he reflected, "I shan't make very good wages. The fish seem to be getting afraid of me."

He paddled about idly a few rods from the shore, having drawn up his line and hook.

All at once he heard a voice hailing him from the river bank:

"Boat, ahoy!"

"Hallo!" answered Robert, lifting his eyes and seeing who called him.

"Can you set me across the river?"

"Yes, sir."

"Bring in your boat, then, and I'll jump aboard. I'll pay you well for your trouble."

Robert did as requested with alacrity. He was very glad to earn money in this way since it seemed he was to have no fish to dispose of. He quickly turned the boat to the shore, and the stranger jumped on board.

He was a man of rather more than the average height, with a slight limp in his gait, dressed in a rough suit of clothes; his head being surmounted by a felt hat considerably the worse for wear. There was a scar on one cheek, and altogether he was not very prepossessing in his appearance.

Robert noted all this in a rapid glance, but it made no particular impression upon him at the moment. He cared very little how the stranger looked as long as he had money enough to pay his fare.

"Where do you want to go?" asked Robert.

"Straight across. There's an old man named Nicholas lives on the other side, isn't there?"

"Yes; he lives by himself."

"Somebody told me so. He's rich, isn't he?"

"Asked the stranger, carelessly. "So people say, but he doesn't show it in his dress or way of living."

"A miser, I suppose?"

"Yes."

"What does he do with his money?"

"I only know what people say."

"And what do they say?"

"That he is afraid to trust banks and hides his money in the earth."

"That kind of bank doesn't pay very good interest," said the stranger, laughing.

"No; but it isn't likely to break."

"Here, boy, give me one of the oars. I'm used to rowing, and I'll help you a little."

Robert yielded one of the oars to his companion, who evidently understood rowing quite as well as he professed to.

Our hero, though strong armed, had hard work to keep up with him.

"Look out, boy, or I'll turn you round," he said.

"You are stronger than I am."

"And more used to rowing, but I'll suit myself to you."

A few minutes brought them to the other shore.

The passenger jumped ashore, first handing a half-crown to our hero, who was well satisfied with his fee.

Robert sat idly in his boat, and watched his late fare as with rapid steps he left the river bank behind him.

"He's going to the old man's house," decided Robert. "I wonder whether he has any business with him."

CHAPTER VII.

How quickly nature falls into revolt
When gold becomes her object. *Henry IV.*

The stranger walked with hasty strides in the direction of an old farmhouse, which could be seen a quarter of a mile away.

Whether it had ever been painted was a question not easily solved. At present it was dark and weather-beaten, and in a general state of neglect.

The owner, John Nicholas, was a man advanced in years, living quite alone, and providing himself for his simple wants.

Robert was right in calling him a miser, but he had not always deserved the name. The time was when he had been happily married to a good wife,

and was blessed with two young children. But they were all taken from him in one week by an epidemic and his life was made solitary and cheerless.

This bereavement completely revolutionized his life. Up to this time he had been a good and respected man with an interest in public affairs. Now he became morose and misanthropic, and his heart, bereaved of its legitimate objects of affection, henceforth was fixed upon gold, which he began to love with a passionate energy.

He repulsed the advances of neighbours and became what Robert called him—a miser.

How much he was worth no one knew. The town assessors sought in vain for stocks and bonds. He did not appear to possess any. Probably popular opinion was correct in asserting that he secreted his money in one or many out-of-the-way places, which from time to time he was wont to visit and gloat over his treasures.

There was reason also to believe that it was mostly in gold, for he had a habit of asking specie payments from those indebted to him, or if he could not obtain them he used to go to a neighbouring town with his bank-notes and get the change effected.

Such was the man about whom Robert's unknown passenger exhibited so much curiosity, and whom it seemed that he was intending to visit.

"I wonder whether the old man is at home!" he said to himself as he entered the front yard through a gateway, from which the gate had long since disappeared. "He doesn't keep things looking very neat and trim, that's certain," he continued, noticing the rank weeds and indiscriminate litter which filled the yard. "Just give me this place, and his money to keep it, and I'd make a change in the look of things pretty soon."

He stepped up to the front door, and, lifting the old-fashioned knocker, sounded a loud summons.

"He'll hear that, if he isn't very deaf," he thought.

But the summons appeared to be without effect. At all events he was left standing on the door-step, and no one came to bid him enter the house.

"He can't be at home, or else he won't come," thought the visitor. "I'll try him again," and another knock, still louder than before, sounded through the farmhouse.

But still no one came to the door. The fact was that the old farmer had gone away early with a load of hay, which he had sold to a stable-keeper living some five miles distant.

"I'll reconnoitre a little," said the stranger.

He stepped to the front window and looked in. All that met his gaze was a bare, dismantled room.

"Not very cheerful," commented the outsider.

"Well, he doesn't appear to be here; I'll go round to the back part of the house."

He went round to the back door, where he thought it best in the first place to knock. No answer coming, he peered through the window, but saw no one.

"The coast is clear," he concluded. "So much the better if I can get in."

The door proved to be locked, but the widows were easily raised. Through one of these he clambered into the kitchen, which was the only room occupied by the old farmer, with the exception of a room above, which he used as a bedchamber. In this kitchen he cooked and ate his meals and spent his solitary evenings.

Jumping over the window-sill, the visitor found himself in this room. He looked around him with some curiosity.

"It is eighteen years since I was last in this room," he said. "Time hasn't improved it—nor me either very likely," he added, with a short laugh. "I've roamed pretty much all over the world in that time, and I've come back as poor as I went away. What's that copy I used to write?" A rolling stone gathers no moss. "Well, I'm the rolling stone. In all that time my Uncle John has been moored fast to his heartstrings, and been piling up gold, which he doesn't seem to have much use for. As far as I know I'm his nearest relation, and there's no reason why he shouldn't laugh out a little for the benefit of the family."

It will be gathered from the foregoing soliloquy that the new comer was a nephew of John Nicholas. After a not very creditable youth he had gone to sea, and, for eighteen years, this was his first reappearance in his native town.

He sat down in a chair and stretched out his legs with an air of being at home.

"I wonder what the old man will say when he sees me," he soliloquised. "Ten to one he won't know me. When we saw each other last I was a smooth-faced youth. Now I've got hair enough on my face, and the years have made their mark upon me, I suspect. Where is he, I wonder, and how long have I got to wait for him? While I'm waiting I'll take the liberty of looking in the closet and seeing if he hasn't something to refresh the inner man; I didn't make much of a breakfast, and something hearty wouldn't come amiss."

He rose from his chair, and opened the closet door.

A small collection of crockery was visible, most of it cracked. But there was nothing eatable to be seen except half a loaf of bread. This was from the baker, for the old man, after ineffectual efforts to make his own bread, had been compelled to abandon the attempt and patronize the baker.

"Nothing but a half-loaf, and that's dry enough," muttered the stranger. "That isn't very tempting. I can't say much for my uncle's fare, unless he has got something more attractive somewhere."

But search as carefully as he might nothing better could be found, and his appetite was not sufficiently great to encourage an attack upon the stale loaf.

He sat down rather discontented, and resumed the current of his reflections.

"My uncle must be more of a miser than I thought if he stints himself to such fare as this. It's rather a bad look-out for me. He won't be very apt to regard with favour my application for a small loan from his treasure. What's that the boy said? He doesn't trust any banks, but keeps his money concealed in the earth. By Jove! it would be a stroke of luck if I could stumble on one of his hiding-places. If I could do that while he was away I would forego the pleasure of seeing him and make off with what I could find. I'll look about me, and see if I can't find some of his hidden hoards."

No sooner did the thought occur to him than he acted upon it.

"Let me see," he reflected, "where is he most likely to hide his treasure? Old stockings are the favourites with old maids and widows, but I don't believe Uncle John has got any without holes in them. He's more likely to hide his gold under the hearth. That's a good idea. I'll try the hearth first."

He knelt down, and began to examine the bricks critically with a view of ascertaining whether any bore the marks of having been removed recently, for he judged correctly that a miser would wish from time to time to unearth his treasure for the pleasure of looking at it. But there was no indication of disturbance. The hearth bore a uniform appearance, and did not seem to have been tampered with.

"That isn't the right spot," reflected the visitor. "Perhaps there's a plank in the floor that raises or, still more likely, the gold is buried in the cellar. I've a great mind to go down there."

He lit a candle, and went cautiously down the rickety staircase. But he had hardly reached the bottom of the stairs when he caught the sound of a waggon entering the yard.

"That must be my uncle," he said. "I'd better go up, and not let him catch me down here."

He ascended the stairs and re-entered the room just as the farmer opened the door and entered.

On seeing a tall, bearded stranger whom he did not recognize, standing before him in his own kitchen, with a lighted candle in his hand, John Nichols uttered a shrill cry of alarm and ejaculated:

"Thieves! Murder! Robbers!"—in a quavering voice.

(To be continued.)

We understand that Kew Bridge will be declared toll free within a few months from this date. This will make the third bridge made toll free within three years, the Kingston bridge having been thrown open to the public in March, 1870, and Walton bridge in the spring of 1871. Efforts are also being made to abolish the toll on the bridge connecting East Molesey and Hampton Court.

We regret to have to state that Mr. Charles Holte Bracebridge, of the Hall, Atherstone, died on Saturday, July 13th, at the age of 73 years. Mr. Bracebridge traced his descent, on the father's side, to Alfred the Great, and on the mother's side he was a lineal descendant of the Holtes of Aston. In early life Mr. Bracebridge took an active part in public affairs, and at the time of the Crimean War accompanied Miss Nightingale on her work of mercy in the hospitals in the East.

"DOCTORSESSES."—Several future "doctoresses" are adopting costumes which are neither male nor female. They wear short dresses, their hair not so long as many of the students of the opposite sex, small round hats, etc. In short, their whole appearance confirms the opinion that if a young girl wishes to study medicine she must cease to be a woman. In fact, she must be, as was said of Queen Elizabeth of England, "more than a woman, and less than a man."

DEATH OF A DOG FROM GRIEF.—The dog of the late Michel Carré (author of *Galathée*, *Mignon*, *Froust*, and other pieces), after ten days of voluntary abstinence, succumbed to the grief caused by the death of his master. After having as it were guarded the body, exposed according to custom at the door of deceased's residence, the faithful animal

accompanied it to the church of Argenteuil, then to the cemetery of the village. On returning home it refused every sort of nourishment, lapping only a few drops of water, and at last expired at the door of his late master's study.

FIGHTING WITH FATE.

CHAPTER XIII.

At the moment of Darrel Moer's intrusion into the morning-room of Floyd Manor, and into the presence of its acknowledged heiress, Miss Floyd was, as we have said, standing at one of the long French windows overlooking the park. She was attired in a morning dress of pale blue cashmere, bordered above its hem, upon its front, and upon the collar and sleeves, with an elaborate embroidery in a gold braid and in a Greek pattern. A belt of thin flexible gold confined this dress at the waist. Her fawn-coloured hair, in which was not the faintest gleam of gold, was puffed and crimped and curled in a style that would have been suitable for a full-dress occasion.

She had been exulting in the grandeur of her prospects, and repeating to herself the title she expected some day to bear, while she watched the fallow deer in the park, the bending of the trees in the wind, and the movements of two or three men belonging to the gardener's staff, as they raked the few dead leaves off the lawn.

She turned, at Darrel Moer's entrance, with an unwonted sparkle in her eyes and with a red glow upon her cheeks, and surveyed him with a cool insolence that might have abashed another man.

But Darrel Moer was not a man to be abashed.

His dark, handsome face, Italian in its colouring and features, lighted up as he approached Miss Floyd, exclaiming:

"Let me also welcome you to Floyd Manor, Cousin Hilda. I am Darrel Moer, whom you have supplanted in the heirship to Lord Waldemar, who is my uncle, but I am your friend nevertheless. I hope I shall win your friendship."

He extended his hand. Miss Floyd, with an expression of pleased surprise on her fair face, yielded him her hand, which he clasped with a lingering pressure.

"I have heard of you, Mr. Moer," said Miss Floyd, graciously. "You were my father's cousin, I believe. I am glad to see you. Grandpapa was speaking of you yesterday, saying, I believe, that he expected you at the manor. It's very grand here, Mr. Moer," and she released her hand from his, and her glance strayed from the window with an expression of pride in her prospective ownership of the manor, "but it is horribly poky and dull. The house ought to be filled with company."

"I suppose you will go to town very soon with my uncle, Miss Floyd?" remarked Darrel Moer, studying her face, and in it her character, with keen intusiveness.

"No, not for a month or more. Grandpapa has been ill—he's not well yet—and he thinks the Yorkshire air does him good. Yorkshire is terribly dull even after Innsbruck. I wish grandpapa would take me to Paris for a season. Do you find grandpapa such a horrid old ogre, Mr. Moer? Must he never be crossed in anything, and does he sit in judgment upon our smallest peccadilloes?"

Darrel Moer smiled as he responded:

"You have conceived a wrong idea of Lord Waldemar, Cousin Hilda. I suppose I may call you cousin? My uncle is stern and relentless when angered, but he is very kind and even tender-hearted, and I foresee that he will be very fond of you."

"I hope he will," said Miss Floyd, sincerely. "I should like to be able to twist that stern old man around my fingers. But I could never be fond of him. His terrible, keen black eyes seem as if they would look me through and through. He invited me into the library yesterday, and asked me questions about my early life, and about my parents and Mrs. Watchley—she's my old nurse, you know, and my present companion—and his lips would now and then curl up in an odd, cynical smile, and once or twice he looked at me as suspiciously as if I were some designing adventuress, instead of his grand-daughter and heiress. He warned me never to attempt to deceive him—horrid old trump! I can't help saying so, if he is my grandfather, Cousin Darrel."

"Your beautiful frankness enchants me," said Darrel Moer. "I foresee that we shall be friends. Floyd Manor has never had a mistress more beautiful than you, although the Floyds have been famed for their fair women. You will make a great sensation up in London, Cousin Hilda."

Miss Floyd's heart seemed to warm towards Moer. She loved flattery as she loved sugar-plums, and neither could be too highly flavoured to suit her pronounced taste. She sat down in a chair beside

the window, and motioned her guest to a seat on a couch near at hand.

He obeyed. The light fell full upon her face, and he compared her countenance, feature by feature, with the picture of young Honor Elliot, which was painted on his mind in colours that would endure for ever.

Miss Floyd was scarcely so slight of figure as Honor, and had not the willowy grace and litherness that characterized Moer's young wife. The golden glory of Honor's hair and the vivid blackness of Honor's eyes found no counterpart in the features of Miss Floyd. Honor's sunny, frank face, with its proud sweetness, its saucy mouth, its pure, calm brow, contrasted singularly in Moer's mind with this delicately fair countenance, with its damask-rose cheeks, and selfish, supercilious, and domineering expression.

"Honor is a pure gem; this girl is but paste," thought Moer, with a stifled sigh. "Why could not Honor have been Miss Floyd? Why could she not have been the heiress? Some fatality must be at work against me. Honor is the only woman I ever loved—and, by Heaven, I love her now, even while I hate her for standing in my way. The heiress is pretty, however, and vain, and it will not be hard to make love to her. I know the way straight to her very small and very selfish heart. If I play my cards aright—and get rid of Honor—I can easily make myself master of Waldemar."

While he thus studied Miss Floyd, and registered his mental decision concerning her, that young lady was assuring herself that "Cousin Darrel" was one of the handsomest men she had ever seen.

His languid drawl in speaking, his indolent manner, his coolly admiring glance, his ready flattery, all impressed her as peculiarly high-bred and redolent of that higher-class English life of which she had read and dreamed, till it seemed to her a very charmed existence.

Moer was fickle of soul, and had made love to a hundred women. He had taught himself all the arts of fascination, and had played with hearts as a pastime. His dark, Italian face, still youthful looking, was as carefully preserved as any woman's, and it was near enough to Miss Floyd's ideal to be very fascinating to her.

"I know that I shall like you, Cousin Darrel," said the young lady, with an affection of frankness and gushing simplicity. "I hope you will stay at the manor as long as I do. I cannot bear the idea of wandering alone through these immense rooms with not a soul to speak to."

"You have your companion, Hilda?"

"Mrs. Watchley?" said Miss Floyd, with a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders. "Oh, yes, I suppose so, but she was my hired nurse, you know; and although she is a curate's widow, and calls herself a gentlewoman, yet she was my hired nurse, and I cannot forget the fact. Why grandpapa should have set her up as my companion at a high salary I can't see. He might first have spoken to me about it I think. You see, Cousin Darrel, Mrs. Watchley presumes on the fact that she educated me and brought me up, and she persists in obtruding her advice upon me at all times, and forces her lower-class ideas upon me, and is always urging me to flatter grandpapa and make him love me. What difference can it make to her whether he loves me or not? He is my grandfather, and I'm the future Baroness Waldemar. I am sure of succeeding him, so what's the use of putting myself out to flatter him?"

"What indeed!" said Darrel Moer.

"The only thing is to avoid angering him," continued Miss Floyd, the colour deepening in her cheeks as she thrummed one jewelled hand on the broad sheet of plate-glass forming the lower half of the window. "There will be no trouble unless I marry some one distasteful to him. In that case he'll turn me out, as he ejected papa, without a penny. And he'd live on and live on until I too died of starvation, just as papa did."

"It would be safe then to marry some one whom he likes," said Moer, insinuatingly. "To be sure your choice would be limited, as he has few favourites. He thinks the young men of the present day strikingly degenerate. There are but two young men whom he really likes. One of them is Sir Hugh Tregaron, a young Cornish baronet, and the other is myself."

Miss Floyd smiled coquettishly, perfectly comprehending the meaning contained within the latter clause of Moer's remark.

"I don't know that I shall marry before grandpapa's death," she observed, demurely. "I should like to hold a sort of court, Cousin Darrel, and be surrounded by suitors, and be haughty, and inaccessible, and marry a duke at last. I don't see why Lady Waldemar, as I shall be, should not marry a duke. I am to be chaperoned in London by the Marchioness of Roxburghe, my own kinswoman, and

the marchioness is connected by marriage with a duke, so I shall become as familiar with titled English people as I have been with foreign nobodies. But you don't look particularly interested in my plans, Cousin Darrel, and after all they are but idle talk. I went through the picture gallery yesterday, and saw all the portraits of the dead and gone Floyds, but there was not a portrait of a Baron Waldemar under three generations. Why is that?"

"Because, as the title and estates are entailed, they go to the eldest son, and Squire Floyd, the present Lord Waldemar, belonged to a cadet branch. He is descended from the second son of a Baron Waldemar who was the fifth baron of that name. The present lord is the ninth baron. The elder branch having died out, he came, very unexpectedly to himself, into the title and estates."

"If there were no Hilda Floyd," said the young lady, meditatively—"if grandpapa had no lineal descendant, you would be next in the line of succession, would you not?"

"Yes. I am the son of his lordship's sister. I supposed myself the future Baron Waldemar until yesterday, and I owe I came hither this morning with some bitter thoughts. But I can say now, with a slight paraphrase of the original, 'the king is deposed; long live the king'—I should say the queen. May nothing occur to depose you, Cousin Hilda."

"Nothing could occur that would depose me," said Miss Floyd, with a slight toss of her head. "I know—to use a vulgar phrase—upon which side my bread is buttered. I shall never be so foolish as to marry against grandpapa's will, as poor papa did."

"By the way, I cannot trace your father's features in your face, Cousin Hilda," said Moer. "You are fair, and so was he; but his hair was like spun gold, and yours is fawn colour. His eyes were black, and yours are light. I have seen a face that reminds me far more vividly of him than yours can ever remind me. Your features and expression are not at all like his."

"So grandpapa says. He attributes the want of likeness to the admixture of the base Arlyn blood," said Miss Floyd, with a calm smile. "Tell me something about grandpapa's business manager, Cousin Darrel. Who is this Mr. Grimrod?"

"The son and successor of his lordship's former business manager on the Floyd estate. He has been promoted since Squire Floyd became Lord Waldemar into manager of all his lordship's property. My uncle trusts him implicitly, and believes him the only honest man in the world."

"He is a very singular-looking man," said Miss Floyd, musingly. "He has been very kind and generous to me—or rather he has treated me with proper respect and attention. He gave me carte blanche at Paris, and I bought everything I fancied, regardless of cost. But of course he had his orders from grandpapa. I suppose he wants to ingratiate himself in my favour, so that I should employ him as my business manager. But I don't think I shall. The very day that grandpapa dies I'll send this Mr. Grimrod and Mrs. Watchley out of my sight, and find a new business manager and a new companion."

Miss Floyd's singular unreserve had its origin in a certain garrulity that at times possessed her. It is probable, however, that some instinct told her that Darrel Moer would be a safe repository of her confidence, or it might have been that she delighted to show him how little she was affected by the changed character of her fortunes, and how little she feared Lord Waldemar, whom all else held in awe.

Darrel Moer, becoming more and more enlightened in regard to her disposition with every word she uttered, told her that his uncle had desired him to show her over the house, and to tell her the family legends, and proposed that they should make an excursion through the dwelling.

Miss Floyd assented, and they rambled through the great well-furnished rooms, and Moer pointed out the exquisite old carvings which were dear to Lord Waldemar's soul, and led the young lady through the drawing-rooms, conservatory, the large octagonal room known as the cabinet of curiosities, which was filled with quaint and curious things that would have been prizes at the South Kensington Museum, the picture gallery, and all the show apartments of the large and stately pile. He talked to her of Floyds and of Waldemars, as if reading out of a genealogical book.

He was versed in the family history, and told his stories with a certain degree of bitterness, his disappointment showing itself continually, despite his efforts to repress it.

He could not forget, when rehearsing the family grandsons, that he would now never be a Lord of Waldemar, and that it was problematical if he ever became the husband of the heiress.

At last, when he had exhausted his memory, and all the rooms had been visited, Miss Floyd looked at

her watch and declared that she must go to her grandfather, whom she had not seen that morning.

"He will think it odd if I don't visit him," she said, half apologetically.

"And I will go to my room," said Moer, with a downward glance at his tweed travelling suit. "We will meet at the lunch table."

He escorted her to the door of the library, and went up to his own old chamber—the one he had been used to occupy during his boyhood.

He made a fresh toilet with scrupulous care, and when he had finished regarded his reflection in the mirror with unqualified satisfaction.

"I have no honest, straightforward little girl to deal with this time," he said to himself. "Miss Floyd is by no means an Honor Glint. My fair cousin Hilda seems a gushing, artless, exuberant creature, declaring her likes and dislikes with the utmost frankness, but she's deep and artful in reality, and while she talked to me she was watching me as a cat watches a mouse. I am not sure but that she is my feminine counterpart. She's as subtle as a serpent, and is sure to feather her nest pretty luxuriously. I must get rid of Honor before I make love to her. Once I find straight sailing I'll pursue and capture her."

At one o'clock he descended to the breakfast room, where Miss Floyd and Mrs. Watchley joined him.

Miss Floyd introduced her companion as one introducing a social inferior, and the three took their places at the luxuriously spread table.

Lord Waldemar would not appear until dinner.

Moer, concealing skillfully his anxieties, chagrin, and schemes under a gay and debonaire exterior, was full of wit and repartee, and the two ladies were charmed with him.

After luncheon they visited the music room for an hour, then Miss Floyd and her companion retired to their own apartments.

Moer strolled through the park during the afternoon, returning an hour before dinner, which was served at the manor at seven.

Lord Waldemar appeared at the table punctually, scrupulously dressed, but he looked worn and unwell. There was a gloom in his eyes with a sternness about his mouth that no one there present rightly understood.

He was courteous always, and did the honours with stately, old-fashioned politeness; he exerted himself to please Miss Floyd, but it was easy to see that his heart was not in his speech or manner.

After dinner he returned to the library.

Miss Floyd, Mrs. Watchley, and Mr. Moer spent the evening in the drawing-room.

Mr. Grimrod came in about half-past eight, but joined Lord Waldemar in the library, remaining with him until ten o'clock. Before leaving the house he looked in upon the group in the drawing-room, but soon departed, going home.

At about half-past ten the party separated, and Darrel Moer took up his bed-room candle from the hall table and went up to his own room.

On entering he started back with an exclamation of surprise.

An arm-chair was drawn up before the fire, and in it, reading the morning paper, was lying, quite at his ease, Mr. Moer's valet, Bing.

"You here!" exclaimed Moer, looking his door. "When did you leave Lancashire?"

"This morning," answered Bing, rising lazily.

"I'm dead tired, sir. Never slept a wink last night. Risked Pentouville horrors and Portland hulks, sir, all out of my devotion to you, Mr. Moer. I hope I shall be remembered in the way I like best, though I can't complain of your generosity, sir. Many's the ticklish job I've done for you, Mr. Moer—"

"And many's the sum of money you've had for it," interrupted Moer, impatiently. "I don't doubt but that your bank account is bigger than mine, Bing, and that I shall have to borrow money of you some day. How did you succeed in this little affair at Bolton?"

The valet replied by taking out from an inner pocket of his coat a long leathern pocket-book, which was securely strapped and locked. He unlocked it with a tiny key which hung at one end of his watch-chain, and brought to view a long folded paper, which at the first glance was seen to be a leaf from the register of a parish church or chapel.

He gave this into his master's hands.

Moer seized it eagerly, unfolded it, and discovered that the leaf contained the registry of his marriage with Honor Glint.

It was unmistakably the authentic registry of the marriage, and as his eyes dwelt upon his own and Honor's signatures Moer demanded:

"How did you get this, Bing?"

"Let myself into the church last night with a skeleton key, sir," answered the valet, as unconcerned as if such acts were among his every-day duties, "and opened the old safe in the vestry with

another key. It was a risky job, but I got off all right."

With a last glance at the page on which were recorded other marriages than his own, Darrel Moer laid the leaf upon the fire and watched it burn to ashes.

Then he produced his pocket-book, and counted out in bank notes the sum he had promised Bing for this nefarious service.

The valet smoothed out the money and stuffed it into the same leathern book which had held the stolen leaf from the marriage register.

"Did you see anything more of the clergyman, Bing?" inquired Moer.

"Yes, sir. I saw him off for London this morning in the early express. He's off for Africa by this time, sir. They said he was to sail to-day."

A lurid gleam appeared in Moer's eyes, and he muttered:

"Safe! safe! This marriage, you understand, is no marriage at all. I abandoned the girl at the altar. I have never even called her my wife. And now the clergyman who married us is the same as dead, and there is no record of the marriage in existence. I have effected a divorce with more expedition and less cost than could have been done by the Divorce Court, while it is not less effective and effectual. It is now the same as if that little ceremony in the chapel had never been performed."

"It's not exactly the same," objected the valet, "since Miss Glint has proof of the marriage."

"Proof! What proof? The word of her maid? What does that amount to? Bah!"

"She has more than that," said Bing. "You see, sir, I hung about the chapel after you left with Mr. Carrington, in the hope of getting a chance to cut out that leaf which you have just burned. But I got no chance. I was about to give up in disgust, and the clergyman and clerk were about to leave, when Miss Glint's maid came hurrying in and asked the clergyman for a certificate of the marriage—"

"She did?"

"Yes, sir. The girl said that as the clergyman was going to Africa, and it was just possible the chapel books might get accidentally burned, her mistress wanted her marriage lines. The clergyman gave them to her. He signed his own name as the person that married the lady to you, and the clerk, the pew-opener, and the girl signed as witnesses. They called on me for my signature, and I had to give it. I tried to tell you this at the gate of the Red House yesterday, but you wouldn't hear me. Miss Glint has thus got in her possession a document that binds you fast to her, even though the clergyman has gone to Africa, and the official registry of the marriage is destroyed."

Darrel Moer uttered a frightful imprecation.

"The girl must have got suspicious," he exclaimed. "Perhaps she means to come to my uncle with the certificate of her marriage and invoke his wrath against me. The innocent little girl I thought her has developed into a dangerous woman. I intend to marry Miss Floyd, my uncle's heiress. Honor may suspect my design, and intend, at the proper period, to cause my arrest for bigamy. Bing, this certificate of marriage must be got at any cost."

"Yes, sir," assented the valet, "but you'll have to get it yourself. I cannot enter the Red House, whereas you are welcome there. I don't like to try burglary when wheeling might get it. You've only to say a few words to Miss Glint, and tell her you love her, and she'll hand you the paper herself."

"I'll try wheedling first and violence afterward," declared Moer. "I cannot sleep with this danger menacing me. Honor is likely to be here to-morrow, and ask for Lord Waldemar or Miss Floyd. You must be on guard at the station on the arrival of every train to-morrow, and let me know by telegraph if she makes her appearance. As for me, I start for Lancashire in the morning. My uncle and Miss Floyd will wonder, I suppose. I shall have to pretend that Carrington is ill, and lying at the point of death."

The resolution was put into execution. The next morning Darrel Moer, with a host of false excuses to his uncle and Miss Floyd, and the promise of an almost immediate return to the manor, set out for Lancashire.

CHAPTER XIV.

SIR HUGH TREGARON returned to the Red House at the time he had appointed, and only an hour or two after young Honor Glint had passed beyond the shelter of its walls, homeless, desolate, and a wanderer.

The dusk of the March evening had fallen, and the air was chill with driving sleet. But Sir Hugh's heart was full of hope and happiness, and he flung off the glistening drops of wet from his hair and garments, and removed his great-coat in the little hall, and inquired for Miss Glint with all the confidence of a young lover who knows himself beloved.

The housemaid ushered him into the cozy wain-

scoted drawing-room, where warmth and colour and light made delicious contrast with the chill and sleek outside.

Mrs. Glint and her daughter were seated here in state, in half anticipation of his coming.

Mrs. Glint had attired herself in a trailing black moiré, with point lace collar and sleeves.

Miss Milner wore a long crimson silk, with pearl-coloured overdress, and a profusion of paste jewels, which she flattered herself impressed every one as being real gems of nearly fabulous value. She believed herself to be arrayed in irresistible style, having a conviction that she had the taste in dress which characterizes a Frenchwoman.

Both mother and daughter arose as Sir Hugh's entrance, and greeted him with effusiveness.

His bright face fell a little as he looked past them and failed to see Honor, but he greeted the two ladies politely, and asked for Miss Glint.

Mrs. Glint put her handkerchief to her eyes in apparent distress, and said, sighing heavily:

"Oh, Sir Hugh! How can I tell you the truth? What shall I say to the captain when he comes home? What a trouble has come upon us all! What can I do? Oh, Sir Hugh, Honor is gone!"

The young baronet started, but still he did not comprehend the full import of Mrs. Glint's words. There was a vague alarm in his voice, however, as he said, hastily:

"I don't understand, madam. Is Miss Glint not at home?"

"No, she is gone," replied Mrs. Glint, wringing her hands in seeming anguish. "She has left the Red House, Sir Hugh. She has spurned my motherly love, and flung off all the restraints of a loving home. She has gone with her maid and all her luggage, and although I implored her to remain, or to tell me at least where she was going, she refused to do either. That girl will break my heart."

"This is singular—almost incredible."

"Is it not? Yet nothing that Honor does can be called singular—she is so very wild and wayward. I have tried to be a mother to her, but she always looked upon me as an intruder in my husband's house. My poor Clarette actually went upon her knees to Honor, entreating her to stay, but she refused."

"Has she not gone to the house of some relative to visit?" inquired Sir Hugh, in utter perplexity and amazement.

"She has no relatives of her own, Sir Hugh, and in leaving the Red House she would not be likely to seek any of the Glint connections. She's not a Glint, Sir Hugh; she's only a poor, nameless girl whom my husband picked up in Malta in her babyhood. He is always doing Quixotic things, and this child, being thrown on his hands, he adopted her as his own, and educated her as a lady. It's my belief that bad blood will always show itself sooner or later, and that Honor's blood is bad. But I was attached to her, and I mourn for her as if she had really been my step-daughter. What is to become of the ungrateful girl?"

"What possible motive could Miss Honor have had in leaving her home?" asked Sir Hugh, speaking more to himself than to Mrs. Glint.

"It's her waywardness and ingratitude," sighed the captain's wife, hypocritically. "Clarette, my poor, sensitive child, go up to my room and get my salts—the gold vinaigrette, you know, dear."

Miss Clarette departed, and Mrs. Glint hastily resumed:

"Oh, Sir Hugh! I fear—I fear—I can hardly tell what I cannot confide in my innocent child the horrible doubts that rack my bosom. But Honor went out yesterday morning with her maid, and when she came back she was as white as any ghost. Before she came in, Mr. Moor—Mr. Darrel Moor, who has been visiting these three months at Lyssure Place—called in great excitement, and asked to see her. On learning that she was not in he went away, but he came back again at a later hour, and again asked for her. Honor sent down a note to him by her maid, and refused to see him. He read the note and burst it up. Then he scrawled a line on a leaf of his notebook, and sent that up to her. Then he stalked out of the house, haggard and excited, and with a look in his eyes that terrified me. There's some terrible mystery between them, Sir Hugh, and I am afraid they have eloped together."

Sir Hugh recalled the particulars of his own morning's interview with Honor. She had shrunk from him in trembling. She had acknowledged that she loved him, but she had said that the avowal of his love for her had come "too late."

Had she been bound by a promise to marry Darrel Moor? Was this the secret of her evident anguish, of her shrinking from him? Had she fled to avoid seeing Sir Hugh again?

"Miss Glint would not have eloped with any man," he forced himself to say, calmly, although his brain was in a whirl. "Why should she elope or make a

secret marriage from her own home? She is as dear to Captain Glint as if she had been the child of his flesh, as well as of his adoption, and she knew herself to be the daughter of his house. There is some mystery, as you suggest, but it is no disgraceful mystery, Mrs. Glint. At what hour did she go?"

"About two hours since."

"She is perhaps at the house of some friend. Captain Glint is a proud man, and it will be well for his sake, as well as Miss Honor's, to say nothing to any one concerning Miss Glint's action, which can without doubt be readily explained by her. She will return, perhaps to-morrow, and I beg you to receive her with kindly affection."

"I would take her back as the prodigal son was welcomed," answered Mrs. Glint, "if it depended upon myself. But she can never associate again with my innocent Clarette. The same roof can never again shelter both."

The matron compressed her lips in a severely virtuous expression, and at the same moment Miss Milner reappeared with the vinaigrette.

Sir Hugh smothered his rising indignation, and arose, saying:

"I cannot search openly for Miss Glint, but I can and shall look for her as—as a brother might do. Wherever she is she is safe in her uprightness and purity as under this roof; but as a young and unprotected girl in her rank of life cannot go whether she pleases without exciting remark I shall try to find her without delay."

"Remember that she can't come back here," said Mrs. Glint, spitefully. "I won't have her in this house. If you want to find her, look for Mr. Darrel Moor, and follow him. I have reason to think that the young lady is somewhere in Bolton, or she may have gone to Manchester. But it will be quite enough to ruin any girl's reputation to have a young gentleman like you inquiring after her. Let her alone, Sir Hugh. She is not worthy your slightest thought. Don't think of going out into the wet so soon. Let Clarette play for you one of Claribel's newest songs. Clarette, open the piano, love."

"You must excuse me this evening, madam," said Sir Hugh, ashamed of sternness covering his grand and noble face. "I am in no mood for songs to-night while Honor is perhaps in peril. Since the shelter of this roof is denied to her it must be denied to me."

"You are in love with her then?" cried Mrs. Glint, coarsely.

The young baronet's face grew haughty and more stern, but he replied, proudly:

"I am, madam, and Heaven permitting, Honor Glint shall be my wife. Your conduct will have no other effect, I trust, than to hasten our marriage."

He bowed coldly and took his leave, hurrying on his great-coat and plunging out again into the night.

Half way down the garden walk he started and came to an abrupt halt, looking back at the Red House, while a sudden conviction of Mrs. Glint's double-dealing seized upon him.

He remembered that instant that Mrs. Glint had never seemed to like the captain's adopted daughter. More than once he had seen, in her glances at Honor, a version, bitterness, and envy. The unsuspecting captain had extolled his wife's affection for Honor, but Sir Hugh had always known in his heart that that affection was feigned.

"Can Mrs. Glint have taken advantage of the captain's absence to send Honor away?" he asked himself. "Before Heaven, I believe she has expelled Honor from the Red House, with a view to securing the captain's property for her own daughter. I am loth to believe ill of any woman, but I know that Mrs. Glint is both designing and unscrupulous. How came the captain ever to fall a prey to her? She has sent Honor away. Darrel Moor has nothing to do with Honor."

This thought speedily became a conviction.

Wheeling about, he pursued his way down the path, and went out at the lawn gate, hurrying up the street.

"Whither would Honor naturally go on finding herself homeless?" he thought as he walked aimlessly yet briskly on. "Certainly she would not stay in Bolton. She would be too sensitive to scandal. She would not go to Manchester. Ah, I have it! She has been out of school only a few months. She would naturally go back and take sanctuary with her old teachers, and await the captain's return. It was the thought of her homelessness that occasioned her distress this morning. I shall find her at Southport."

Acting upon this idea, he went to the railway station, and found an old station porter with whom he had a speaking acquaintance.

A few skillfully put questions elicited from this man the information that Miss Glint, who was well known at the station, had taken the five-o'clock up train with her maid, and was booked for Southport.

Sir Hugh procured a ticket, and half an hour later was on his way also to Southport.

On arriving he went directly to the Palace Hotel, the hour being late.

He knew the name of the school at which Honor had been kept for many years, and the next morning, about ten o'clock, he took a cab and drove thither.

He obtained audience with the proprietress, an elderly gentlewoman, and asked to see Miss Glint.

To his amazement, he learned that Honor had not been seen by her former teachers, nor had she been heard from by them.

He left his card with a request that he might be informed of her movements, if they should be communicated to her former instructors, and took his leave.

"She is in Southport, I know," he said to himself. "But how am I to find her?"

He visited all the hotels, and obtained a paper with the printed visitors' list, but did not find the name he sought. He wandered up and down the streets, and in the afternoon went down upon the promenade and out upon the chain-pier, with no eyes for the bare sands and the dusky riders, but with a keen glance at every slender figure and a searching look under every girlish round hat.

Finding his quest unsuccessful, he rode back in the tram-car the length of the pier, and passed out at the turn-gate, mingling with the throng of the promenade.

He had not taken ten steps when he beheld, a few paces in advance of him, a man whom he well knew as a libertine and roué—Darrel Moor!

The next moment he saw that Moor was slyly and secretly following a young girl, and that girl he recognized as Honor Glint's maid!

(To be continued.)

STRIKES EPIDEMIC.—A very able man has written a very able book to prove that strikes are not figuratively, but actually, epidemic; that certain currents of atmosphere carry the disease over the land as it would the cholera or any other plague. It is a fact that the cockle-gatherers at some of the sea-side places have struck for higher pay.

THE RECENT INTERIOR HEAT.—The Burmese Ambassadors one day at Wimbledon had to give in. The intense heat was more than they could coolly accept, and they retired long before their intended time of departure, swearing—if that can be done in Burmah—that they couldn't stand such a heat, which to them even was quite unknown. They got it long and equal, we got it strong and short. There cannot be a doubt that it is occasionally hotter in England than in India.

JULY IN NEW YORK.—In New York the heat of the first July week has not been paralleled within ten years. On Tuesday, the 2nd July, the mercury at 3 p.m. stood at 100 deg. in the shade. On the Sunday and Monday previous it reached 98 deg., the three days averaging nearly ten degrees hotter than the corresponding days of 1871. The suffering of both man and brute has been terrible. In the crowded business streets of down town, in the new buildings in process of erection, it was pitiable to see the labourers working unprotected by shade and sweltering in the fierce rays of the sun. Cases of sunstroke were frequent. On the 2nd July nearly one hundred and fifty persons were prostrated during the day. Owing to the admirable ambulance system now in working order throughout the city the sufferers were promptly cared for, but about seventy of their number it is stated have died.

PROTECTION OF WILD BIRDS.—Mr. A. Johnston's Bill, which has been read a third time in the House of Commons, for the protection of Wild Birds during the breeding season, did not have an entirely smooth passage through the Select Committee to which it was referred by the House of Commons. It was resolved to specify the birds to be protected. On the hedge-sparrow being proposed for insertion in the list there was a division and a tie, and the bird got in only by the chairman's then voting. The same thing occurred with the whinchat. The thrush was proposed for admission upon the list by Mr. Maguire, but was thrown out by a vote of nine against six. The plea of the sky-lark has been rejected by the House itself. However, 78 kinds of wild bird have been put in the schedule for protection. Four members divided against the owl, but 14 voted for placing it in the list.

OBSERVATIONS OF ST. SWITHIN'S DAY.—Upon the approach of St. Swithin's Day many persons probably make themselves anxious on the subject of the weather. It may therefore be a consolation to them to point out that the result of observations taken at Greenwich for the twenty years preceding 1861 proves that no confidence whatever is to be placed in St. Swithin's Day. Indeed, the more it rains on the 15th of July the greater the probability of fine weather. In 1841, when St. Swithin's Day

was wet, there were 25 rainy days between the 15th of July and the 24th of August, in 1845 26 rainy days, in 1851 13 rainy days, in 1853 13 rainy days, in 1854 16 rainy days, and in 1856 14 rainy days. On the other hand when St. Stephen's Day was fine, as in the following years, the results were painful in the extreme. In 1842 12 rainy days, in 1843 22 rainy days, in 1844 30 rainy days, in 1846 21 rainy days, in 1847 17 rainy days, in 1848 31 rainy days, in 1849 29 rainy days, in 1850 17 rainy days, in 1852 19 rainy days, in 1853 18 rainy days, in 1857 14 rainy days, in 1858 14 rainy days, in 1859 13 rainy days, and in 1860 30 rainy days.

GRATIA MOORE'S RECOMPENSE.

I WAS in church; and, it being the Feast of St. Stephen, the clergyman was reading the lesson for the day. "And all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel," etc. My thoughts wandered off, away and away. I wondered how St. Stephen's face had looked. It had a transfigured, illumined look, I supposed, as though the veil was lifted, and it was seeing behind the veil. Something magnetic drew my eyes to a pew in front of me, where a girl sat, leaning against a pillar; and her face had the veritable St. Stephen expression upon it. I knew then how the first martyr of the noble army had looked. I suppose that the account of how the heavens opened, and of what was then revealed, had brought that light to Gratia Moore's face. As, indeed, why should it not transfigure the faces of all of us to hear what we might see were our poor, blinded eyes opened?

I had seen Gratia Moore two or three times before, and had heard of her still oftener, although I had only been living a couple of weeks in Leeds, which was her home, but I had never thought her beautiful until to-day.

As she sat there I found myself wondering why artists and poets did not flock to see her; however, as we came down the aisle of the church together, the marvellous beauty had almost entirely faded out, and she was almost commonplace-looking once more.

This set me to thinking and pondering still farther. Might there not be a possibility of beauty in every face, which would be developed and glorified in the eternal light? Might not many a plain face become beautiful then?

In this "work-a-day world" dress has so much to do with a woman's beauty; and Gratia Moore was poor and hard worked, and had neither time nor money to spend on more accessories.

The faint light that fell upon her from the stained-glass windows of St. Luke's Church served to conceal the fact that her two-years-old velvet-reen sash was threadbare in places, and rubbed gray where it was not threadbare; that the curl had been taken out of the feather in her wintry-looking straw hat by long exposure to all sorts of damp and rainy weather; that her kid gloves—bought a size too large from pur-sue of economy to begin with—were worn white at the finger-tips, and, besides, were mended; that her black alpaca dress was darned conspicuously in the front breadth; and that, to conclude, there was a patch on her right boot.

Alas, the charitable "dim, religious light" concealed all these deficiencies; but it threw precisely the requisite tender shadow over her face, which in the ordinary glare of day was strong and fresh and wholesome rather than saintly and ascetic.

Her hair was golden-brown, her eyes were blue, and her skin was white and clear.

After all she ought to have been a pretty girl; perhaps she would have been if she had taken the time to make the most of herself, or even to be looked at.

"Whither bound?" I asked at the church-door.

"Home. My brother Willie is sitting with mother while I am here; but he wants to go out, and of course mother can't be left alone."

I watched her hastening along, her shabby-gentle garments blown about in the gale. Her mother was completely crippled by rheumatism, and unable to leave the house—in fact, her room. Added to this she was beyond belief peevish and irritable. Still she was glad to see whoever would go to see her, and almost every one who knew her visited her very constantly.

In the course of the morning I went round to the little house where the Moores lived, and knocked at the door.

Gratia came running down the stairs to let me in, so fresh, so energetic, that it came over me with a pang what an effort and a trial it must be to one of her nature to submit to a long, close confinement in a sick-room.

"Is your mother able to see me, Gratia?" I asked. "I have brought her these oranges and some fresh sponge cake."

"Oh, yes, mother will be so glad to see you. Will you come upstairs?"

And she led the way to an upper storey, where were two good-sized rooms opening into each other. In the front room Mrs. Moore sat, propped up in a large cushioned chair, a cripple, as I have already stated—helplessly crippled by rheumatism.

She held out her attenuated hand to me as I entered, and said:

"Good-day; I am glad to see you," in querulous tones.

She was frightfully gaunt, peaked, emaciated—little more than a bundle of skin and bones—and with shining, glittering black eyes that looked as though they had burnt the hollows in her face out of which they gleamed.

I sat and talked to Mrs. Moore, and presently read to her, in accordance with her own request; whilst Gratia, after lingering a while, moved off into the next room.

I could hear her voice presently, hearing a child's lesson, first in spelling, then the multiplication table. She had the three little girls of her only sister under her care—left motherless a year ago.

Their father paid her for her care of them, and this sum, in fact, constituted the larger part of the support of mother and daughter. What with teaching these children, and sewing for them, and nursing them through all their childhood ailments, Gratia's time was very fully occupied, especially as, superadded to this, was the care of her mother, a nightly as well as daily anxiety.

I looked in upon Gratia before I went away. She was seated on a low chair in front of the wood fire that burned on the hearth; the youngest child played on the rug in front of the fire; one little girl leaned against her aunt, spelling out her lesson to the primer; the third sat at a table hard by, writing laboriously on a slate. Gratia herself was sewing on a blue and white check apron, dividing her attention and her eyesight between her work and the book held up before her.

I nodded at her from the doorway.

"Don't move," I said; "don't come down with me. I know the way out."

But she sprang up, in her active, eager way.

"I wouldn't have missed this breath of fresh air for the world," she said as we both stood together for a moment on the front steps. Then I saw in a flash what a constant strain and effort the life she led must be to her, with her physical strength and activity, which demanded motion and change.

"Will you go out again to-day?" I asked her.

"No," she replied, "I hardly think I will. The afternoons are so short now, and I must see about getting mother something to eat, then the children and I have our dinners, and after that mother will begin to be sleepy. Sue always goes to bed early, like the chickens."

So I left her.

All that day, and, in fact, during many days afterwards, I was haunted by the memory of Gratia Moore. I knew of many lives of greater privation and need, or even of greater bodily discomfort, than hers was, but I knew of none that appealed more to my sympathies.

It seemed to me that it was a life of daily and hourly self-sacrifice.

Her memory haunted me, bringing with it the picture of her fresh, bright-coloured face, and her flowing, robust figure, as she stood looking wistfully after me as I walked down the street.

I called again to see her the next day, and to inquire for Mrs. Moore, but I did not see Gratia. One of the children, Nannie by name, opened the door, and told me that grandma was suffering so much pain that Aunt Gratia would not be able to see any company; so I left my love and my name, and called again the next day with the same result.

Although I was a working woman, still my path in life had always been an easier and a sunnier one than falls to the lot of most women who earn their daily bread.

As it had been my custom to indulge myself occasionally with holidays, and to spend them always with my friends, the summer following that St. Stephen's Day about which I have just written I passed at a pretty seaside village where an old school friend of mine had her home.

A beautiful home it was, built near the sea, which washed the smooth beach, down to which sloped the grounds of the "Anchorage."

"You will find it—oh, so quiet," Mrs. Stanley said. "But I don't believe you will mind that very much, will you? We will talk a great deal, and walk a great deal, and read a great deal, and sew a great deal. We will prove that it is possible for two women to be thrown together morning, noon, and night, without being bored."

My friend was a widow, by-the-bye; and she was living in this quiet place with her two boys, whom

she was educating herself, and thus occupying both her head and her hand.

These two boys, as it happened, were absent now; they had gone on a fishing excursion with their uncle, who was a lawyer; he had run down to see his sister for a week or so for a change of air and scene.

Madgie and I entertained each other for a few days without let or hindrance, then the fishing party returned—John and Ralph Stanley and their uncle, Gibson Hays.

They had gone for some distance up the coast in a schooner, and had there "roughed it" to the heart's content of the boys—splendid fellows of ten and twelve—on a small island in the channel, celebrated for its excellent fishing.

The afternoon that the fishing party returned I was upstairs writing a letter—by a curious coincidence as I afterwards thought—to Gratia Moore.

Ralph Stanley burst in upon me impetuously, with his eager:

"How do you do, Aunt Mary?" and had his arms about my neck in no time.

Then I heard a man's loud, cheery voice below stairs, and Margaret saying:

"Dearest Gibson, how are you?"

I left the brother and sister alone until tea-time, then I joined them. I found Mr. Hays a fine-looking, active man of thirty or thereabouts, with whom I instantly came to be on easy terms.

He laughed, told funny stories, and ran tilts of wit with his two sharp young nephews, which afforded us all considerable amusement.

In the course of conversation I mentioned the name of the town where I had been recently staying.

Mr. Hays instantly turned from John Stanley and the subject on hand between the two and asked me, eagerly:

"Are you from Leeds, Miss Lee?"

"Of course, Gibson. I have told you so twenty times," his sister said. "But you never remember anything."

"A sweeping and undeserved accusation," he replied. "Besides, I don't believe you ever told me. I know I should have remembered it if you had."

"Do you know Leeds?" I inquired.

"Yes—no. I was there last summer. I have a few acquaintances there—the Moores; do you know the Moores?"

"My Gratia Moore? Is it possible you know her?"

I questioned, joyfully.

His manner struck me as a little constrained as he replied:

"Yes, I have known her for a dozen years or so. But how enthusiastically you spoke her name."

"Meek souls there are who little dream

Their daily strife an angel's theme."

Of such is Gratia Moore," I quoted.

"Then you know her well?" Madgie asked.

"Indeed I wish I knew her better. If I were ill or in prison, or afflicted, or in trouble, I probably should."

"Yes; she has a genius for self-sacrifice, and, like most enthusiastic women, she is disposed to run the thing into the ground. For my part, I believe that she owes something to herself as well as to other people."

"Ah, you do know her well then?" I said, quite eagerly.

He laughed a little embarrassed laugh.

"Strange that I should be the brother and you the intimate friend of Madgie; and yet that we should know so little of each other," he said. "Did Madgie never happen to tell you that I married a sister of your friend Gratia? I am a widower now, and Gratia has our children under her care."

"Ah, yes, I have seen them. I begin to understand."

"They were to have been with my own mother—nearer me; but she died suddenly, and our home was broken up. I did not wish to increase Gratia's cares, but to tell the truth I fancy that, for pecuniary reasons, it was convenient for her to receive the little girls into the family. To beg she is ashamed—the proudest woman in the world—never would allow the smallest pecuniary assistance from me or any other of her relatives; but, all the same, she and her mother are very poor."

"Your little girls are well provided for. She is like a mother to them," I said, soberly.

As I said so I happened to look up, and caught sight of Gibson Hays's face, and to my amazement he was blushing violently; moreover, he did not succeed in covering his confusion in the least. He stammered some reply to me, coughed, then gave it up as a bad bargain, pushed back his chair, and walked out of the room.

Madgie poured herself out a second cup of coffee, and laughed a little satirically.

"Don't look so mystified, Mary," she said. "Gibson looks as though he had done something he was ashamed of; but, in reality, he has not. Only he is in



[GRATIA'S GRIEF.]

love with Gratia Moore, and she won't marry him."

"I should think not—his wife only dead a year." "Well—but—that is just like Gibson. He is one of your impulsive, ardent natures. It does not occur to him to be governed by the proprieties. By-the-by, he never really knew Gratia until recently. I believe that he, in fact, never saw her but twice until after her sister's death. He is desperately in love with her now, however."

"I am not surprised. She is loveable to the last degree. I respect any man who is able to make the discovery. But what a pity that she doesn't like him!"

"I am not so sure that she does not. But—you see the circumstances are peculiar. Her brother-in-law, and 'the funeral baked meats,' and all that sort of thing, you know."

After that, during the day or two that Gibson Hays remained with us, I studied him carefully. I liked him. He was so frank, so genial, so hearty. Then he was a most warm-hearted, devoted brother and uncle. To be sure, he was not free from that besetting masculine failing—selfishness. He liked his own way, and he exacted constant care and attention—but, on the other hand, he was loveable; it was more pleasant than in most cases to minister to his shortcomings. Finally, it seemed to me that he was a man who would not be likely to sue in vain for a woman's favour. There was something so absolute, so positive, so almost arrogant about him.

The night before he left he came to me to say a few quiet words of farewell. As a matter of course I was not surprised to hear him say:

"I am going to see my little girls. Have you any message for Gratia?"

"My very best love," I said, warmly. "And tell her not to over-exert herself during this warm weather."

"You might as well send word to the wind not

to blow." A pause ensued; then he said, "Miss Lee, Madgie has told me that you know all about our difficulties—Gratia's and mine."

I hesitated.

"Madgie told me that you cared for Gratia."

"But not that the poor child cares for me? Thank Heaven that she does; although I had a great deal of trouble to make her admit it. Poor child, she really thinks that it is a sin, I believe. Everything is against us. Miss Lee, I want you to say a good word for me when you go back."

I laughed.

"It is against my principles to interfere in a love-affair in any way, Mr. Hays," I said. "I am sure that the persons interested understand each other a great deal better than any outsider can. I am going to be perfectly candid with you. I am sure that Gratia would consider any advice or suggestion—nay, any allusion of mine to your position towards her—a piece of impertinence."

"It is difficult to explain myself," he replied, "but I will make the attempt. Gratia has no intimate friends, hardly any acquaintances. Her life of entire devotion to duty—nursing, teaching—has cut her off from the ordinary companionship and sympathy of girls of her own age. She sees things through a distorted medium. Now I do not suppose that she has ever put the matter of marrying me before any one but her mother. And her mother is most bitterly opposed to it. It is useless for me to argue the point with Mrs. Moore. She has quite made up her mind, and she is a woman of the most violent and bitter prejudices. It is a hard case that the unreasonable selfishness of an infirm old woman should interfere with the happiness of two young persons capable of enjoying life to the uttermost."

"Still," I argued, "Gratia's first duty is to that poor old woman, who is her mother. Mrs. Moore requires her daily and hourly. She could never spare Gratia, of course."

"What do you take me for, Miss Lee? I am not a brute. It did not occur to me to separate mother and daughter. I made it to be distinctly understood at the beginning that Mrs. Moore's home would always be with us, with Gratia and myself. Personally she would be better off than she is now, as I should be able to do more for her comfort under my own roof than Gratia will allow me to do now. I am not a rich man by any means, but I could support the one household comfortably. As it is, what I pay for my children's board and tuition only supports the Moore family with the greatest frugality."

"I don't believe that I quite understand; why does Mrs. Moore make this opposition? If you were to wait awhile, until the customary season of mourning was over, would she not be reconciled to the idea?"

"Pshaw," and he began to walk up and down the piazza, where he had found me sitting. "If she thinks that I am to be browbeaten into a regard to any mere absurd usage of society she is mistaken. I have made up my mind that it must be either one thing or another with Gratia and myself. Mrs. Moore has sent me word that she will not receive me at her house as her daughter's lover. I mean to have it distinctly understood, once for all, that either I am to be received in that character or not at all. I will not permit myself to be kept in suspense any longer; it is bad for me, body and soul."

I could not help thinking to myself that he was very fully alive to the interests of his own body and soul. But I let that pass.

"However," he continued, "Mrs. Moore does not put her opposition to me on any such grounds. She does not complain of too great haste in the matter. She positively and once for all refuses to allow Gratia to marry the husband of her dead sister."

"Oh, hush," I said. "That is between herself and Heaven. I am sure that she is sincere in what she says. It is only just to respect conscientious scruples."

"She has no right to exercise them where other people are concerned. However, I have digressed from the original subject matter; I know that you love Gratia, and I know that she is otherwise almost friendless. Won't you talk this over with her, and at all events let her realize that there may be two sides to the question? I will see her first, and I will tell her that you and I have discussed it together; so that the ground may be broken."

I agreed rather dejectedly to what he proposed. It seemed to me that anything I might say would have very little effect.

Mr. Hays wrote to his sister, but in the very briefest, curt way, after leaving her.

"The general style of letter Gibson favours me with," Madgie said, tossing me over one in which he announced his return once more to office work.

Soon afterwards I returned to Leeds.

The day after my arrival I met Gratia Moore. I was positively shocked at the change in the girl. She was pale, thin, care-worn, and with red circles around her eyes, the token of much weeping.

"My dear Gratia!" I cried, stopping her; she was for her part so much self-absorbed that she would have passed me by without a recognition; "my dear Gratia, have you been ill?"

"No; I have been perfectly well. I am tired this morning, that is all—in fact very tired. I have been up with mother all night; she had one of her bad attacks. My own head ached badly, and, when poor mother had dropped off asleep, I took advantage of it to come out for a breath of fresh air."

"And your little nieces—are they well?"

"Very. May I walk on with you, Miss Mary?"

"Are you going in my direction?"

"I am going in your direction, my dear child, wherever that may be. I want to see you, and talk to you."

"Thank you. How kind you are."

Her eyes filled up.

"The children are expecting their father to-morrow," she began, presently. "The little things are all happy expectation."

"Ah—that is well. Gratia, did Mr. Hays tell you that we met each other this summer at his sister's?"

"Yes, he told me. He told me also that he had taken you into his confidence. That is a great comfort to me, because I feel so alone; and there is no one who knows anything about me, or to whom I can talk; and I so often wish that I had a kind friend who would consult with me."

"Then you are in doubt? You have not made up your mind?"

"How can I? Gibson insists upon his claims upon me, and I know that no one has a stronger claim upon me than my poor mother. If I really and truly did owe a duty to each it would be impossible for me to decide which outweighed the other."

"And your duty to yourself, my poor child?"

"I try my best to put that entirely out of the question. Of this I feel assured—that if I can once arrive at an honest decision I shall have strength given me to carry it out."

"What would the wish of your heart be in the matter, Gratia?" I asked, suddenly.

"I would marry Gibson to-morrow if I could conscientiously," she answered, after the very faintest hesitation. "I mean, if mother had not set her face against it."

"What do you think will be the end of all this, my dear child?" I asked her.

"Don't ask me," and her eyes filled and her voice shook. "I believe that Gibson loves me now; but I also believe that if I will not consent to an immediate engagement or marriage he will be angry with me and give me up. I think he is the kind of man who must have some woman to love and to make him happy and comfortable. Then he loves his own way dearly. If I thwart him he will cease to care for me, and after a while marry some one else."

She paused, her voice broken by sobs.

"Gratia," I said, "you were talking of duty just now; and I asked you about your duty to yourself. You say you have determined to put that out of the question, but I think you are wrong. I think that each one of us has a work to do in life, and that the more fully and amply and largely our natures are developed the better we can do it. Heaven has put a great happiness within your reach; you did not ask for it, wish for it, work for it; it came to you. Now have you the right to put it aside, instead of using it and being happy in it, and making others happy in it? Remember that another person is concerned in your decision. Don't allow your beautiful theory of self-sacrifice to bewilder your sense of right and wrong. You might make a sacrifice of yourself, but you have no right to do it of another person."

"Would you have me marry, and perhaps kill my mother by the shock it would be to her?"

"No; but I would have you adopt a middle course. Say, engage yourself to Mr. Hays, and trust to him to bring your mother round."

Her face brightened for a moment.

"You really advise this, Mary?"

"I really do."

A softened expression crept over her face.

Poor child! It was evidently a revelation to her that any one should think it right for her to be happy, excepting Gibson Hays, whose judgment on the subject she did not consider an impartial one. She drew a long breath of relief, then she put up a hand to her eyes to dash away a tear or two.

I tried to speak in a cheerful, unrestrained tone of voice.

"My dear child," I said, "your whole life is before you yet. There is a great deal of happiness in store for you, no doubt. I am not surprised that you should be discouraged and disheartened now, and that you should even fancy that it is not possible for you ever to be happy—happier, for instance, than you have been. You have had a very hard time all your life. But perhaps, dear, it was intended that your discipline should come first; and it may be that you will enjoy the sunshine all the more by contrast."

Whereupon she smiled through her tears. Poor child! she was by no means averse to being comforted.

Of course I was very anxious to learn the result of Gibson Hays's visit. I had not long to wait. The day after his arrival he came in to see me, after school hours, and had his talk out. He was exceedingly agitated, and very much disturbed at the opposition which Mrs. Moore still persisted in making to his marriage with Gratia. I waited until the first torrent of his disgust and indignation had expended itself, and then I inquired whether Gratia had suggested to him that they should let the matter remain in abeyance for a while.

"You love and trust each other," I said. "And I take it for granted that your minds will remain unchanged, at the end, say, of half a dozen years. Meanwhile Gratia has her duty to her mother to perform, which will keep her from fretting, and fully occupy her mind and heart. Gradually I do believe that Mrs. Moore's opposition will wear out."

"Or—she may die. Why not suggest the speediest way out of the dilemma? How shocked you look. Well, pardon me. To tell the truth, I am excited and overwrought, and I give the go-by to the proprieties. Virtually, if Gratia and I were to agree to wait, it would be agreeing to bide our time."

"As far as I see it is your only alternative."

He began marching up and down the room, as was his custom when agitated.

"No, it is not our only alternative. If Gratia loved me, if she trusted me, she would not hesitate; she would marry me out of hand, as I wish her to, in spite of the snarlings of an old woman in her dotage."

"Oh, Mr. Hays, she is Gratia's mother."

"And I am Gratia's, at least I am to be, Gratia's husband. Either that or nothing to her. This is not an ordinary case. This is an emergency where, if ever a woman needed a man's care and protection, Gratia Moore needs mine. And I repeat that if she loved and trusted me as she ought to love and trust the man she marries she would yield to my wishes and to my judgment in the matter."

How very dogmatic and positive he was.

I said, with cold severity:

"It does not seem to occur to you, Mr. Hays, that Gratia would be the greater sufferer of the two should your engagement be cancelled."

"I doubt it," he said, querulously. "The truth is Gratia makes an idol of self-sacrifice. I believe that she delights in making herself uncomfortable. There is such a thing as delighting in misery. St. Simeon Stylites on his column, and Gratia Moore in her life of single blessedness, are twin souls."

I spoke unadvisedly with my lips.

"You do not love her," I cried.

He stopped in his walk and looked me full in the face.

He was a great, strong man, not given to much outward show of sentiment.

My own heart swelled when I saw that his eyes were full of tears. He did love Gratia dearly. She put aside a good thing—a real thing—when she put aside that man's love.

"Yes," he said, "Heaven knows that I do love her. But I will do my best to get over it. I owe a duty to myself, and I must not let this disappointment interfere with the work I have to do in the world."

"What do you mean? Have you and Gratia parted?"

"Gratia and I have parted. She is to keep the children, however; at least until I can make some arrangement for having them near me."

"You have lost the noblest and the best and the truest girl in the world," I cried.

"Mr. Hays, forgive me if I transgress the bounds of our acquaintance, but I feel that my love for Gratia is the best excuse I can make for my freedom of speech. You are a man, and you are going back into the world, where you will be engrossed by other cares and other interests. Men forget sooner than women do. I fear that Gratia will not forget this very soon. I beg you to think of her more than of yourself. Are you not adding a thousandfold to the burdens she is already called upon to bear? Is it not in your power to bear for her and with her to be patient and tender for her sake? Let me tell you that I think that this will crush the little spring and energy left right out of her life."

"I fancy she will not be heartbroken," he answered, with a short, hard laugh. "No, Miss Mary; I am satisfied that I have decided for the best. I have neither the inclination nor the disposition to submit to the useless, senseless caprice of two women. I have not arrived at my decision rashly, but after very mature deliberation."

He had risen to go.

"In that case I trust you will pardon my gratuitous advice," I said.

"I thank you cordially for your frankness. I am very happy to have heard your views. As a friend of Gratia's, I knew that what you would say would be to the point."

"I am very, very sorry that I have pleaded my cause so lamely," I said, with tears of mortification in my eyes.

"I shall see you at my sister's—when?" he queried, dismissing the subject.

"I am sure I can't say," I answered, snappishly.

Truth to tell, I felt then that I never desired to set eyes on him again. Nevertheless, I did see him at his sister's the Christmas of that very year, as I shall presently relate.

Meantime I saw Gratia very constantly. She was very loving and sweet to me from the date of her trouble with Gibson Hays. I think she turned to me with especial tenderness because I knew more about him and the whole affair than any one else, he having chosen to take me into his confidence.

After mature deliberation I made up my mind that the kindest and wisest course for me to pursue towards Gratia would be one of perfect candour and frankness.

When she told me, brokenly, that she and Mr. Hays had parted I told her, in return, that so he had informed me. I encouraged her to talk to me; it seemed to me better that she should talk it off—that is, to a certain extent. Alas, I knew full well that there were things of which she could not, would not speak, poor child. The keenest pangs she must bear in silence.

But I nerved myself to deal a blow straight at her idol, although I feared that in so doing I should forfeit her love. I spoke to her of Gibson Hays as I

believed him to be—selfish, exacting, arbitrary. I was at the pains to repeat to her parts of his last conversation with me. I wanted Gratia to realize that her loss might in the end prove to be her gain.

Alack, I had my trouble for my pains. I discovered, gradually, that Gratia had loved in the completest way—not Gibson Hays without his faults, but Gibson Hays in spite of his faults. I could have cried to think how unjust Fate had been. These two would have been so happy together.

As I said, at Christmas I went to spend my vacation at my dear Madgie's. The snow was on the ground, and the wind whistled through the leafless trees, and all the brightness and sweetness of the dear summer season had departed; but in spite of this the cheerful "Anchorage" was not the less attractive; nay, perhaps by very force of contrast, more attractive than ever.

Madgie understood to perfection the art of making a home beautiful; she had the knack of pulling a chair out, placing a table correctly, and drawing a curtain back at just the proper angle of light, which constitutes with some women an especial branch of art.

The boys had holiday too, and had been sent to spend a part of it in town with their uncle. They were to come home, however, the day before Christmas, and bring Mr. Hays back with them. I confess that I rather regretted this. My feelings for Gibson were not of the most friendly nature.

However, I made up my mind to meet him on neutral ground.

The subject of my dear Gratia should not be alluded to between us; henceforth I would know him simply as Madgie Stanley's brother, with whom I would be on terms of indifferent acquaintanceship. The world ought to be wide enough for us both.

"I expect a cousin of mine to stay with me for a while," Madgie said the day after my arrival. "I had not expected her so early; but she has just written to me that it will be more convenient for her to come now than later. I refer to Emma Steele. Have you ever heard me speak of her?"

No, I had not.

"She is a bright, energetic, active girl. She has been at the head of her father's house ever since her mother died, six years ago. Just at present poor Emma is in the vale of humiliation; her father has married again, and she is obliged to surrender the keys of office to the young and I am told overbearing woman he has married."

"Too bad," I said, cordially.

It seemed to me to be a very hard case. I was disposed to like Miss Steele forthwith.

When she came the next day I decided that I should have liked her in any case. She was almost a beauty—would have been quite a beauty had not her figure been rather heavy and unwieldy. But her face was charming—of the large, noble order—with bright, frank blue eyes, and a profusion of sunny golden hair.

Then there was something irresistibly frank and natural and attractive about her.

"Gushing," was Gibson Hays's first comment the night he came and found her domiciled at Mrs. Stanley's.

"It is an old saying—trite but true—that men are almost universally slaves to the power of beauty. Judging by myself, I should say not more so than women; certainly, it has always been very easy for me to comprehend the power of the spell which a beautiful woman throws around her."

And Emma Steele was beautiful enough to exercise this spell. She had a magnetic way about her, too. I noticed, that first night of Mr. Hays's arrival, that when she spoke we all stopped talking and listened to what she had to say.

I caught myself smiling at her enthusiasm, her eagerness; and I also caught a reflection of my own amusement on Gibson Hays's face.

Mr. Hays devoted the next morning to the amusement and entertainment of his sister and her guests. He talked and read to us, and I was forced to admit, in spite of previous prejudices, that he was as agreeable and interesting as possible.

Emma and he got along capitally. Evidently she had been very little in the world, and a man like Mr. Hays—well read, fluent, suggestive—was a new experience to her. Her pleased attention and interest in what he was saying were the best silent flattery she could have bestowed upon him.

"What on earth are you thinking about, Mary?" Madgie asked me, suddenly, touching my arm to rouse me from a brown study.

Emma had gone upstairs to write a letter home, and Mr. Hays had betaken himself off to a cigar and a solitary walk.

I had dropped my work into my lap, and I was sitting, leaning forward with clasped hands, so absorbed that Madgie was obliged to repeat her question before I took it in.

"I was thinking about my dear Gratia Moore," I answered, honestly.

"Ah," Madgie said; "my brother has never mentioned her name since he told me that their engagement was broken. I think that he felt it very much, however."

"But he is endeavouring to exercise the usual masculine fortitude and composure," I said. "He has more self-control than Gratia."

"Oh, well," Madgie said, "what would you have? So few men have really deep feelings. If Gibson gets over his disappointment he will be neither better nor worse than nine-tenths of his fellows. He is my brother, and I love him; but all the same, I know very well that he has neither a very constant nor a very ardent nature. He made a most devoted, excellent husband to the woman he married; and I am morally certain that he will make equally as devoted a husband to whoever may be his second wife. But, nevertheless, until he takes the fatal step it will be apt to be off with the old love and on with the new" with him."

"You do not describe a very exalted nature," I said.

"Dear Mary, we do not live in a very exalted world. We must take people and things as we find them. Indeed, I think it is a pity to have a nature pitched above the ordinary key of those about you."

"Perhaps it is," I replied. "I fancy that Gratia, for one, would be happier if she could have adapted herself to circumstances as readily as your brother has."

I wondered was it possible that Madgie was right. Look at Madgie herself—so bright, so handsome, so prosperous.

Yet she had never troubled herself about matters of sentiment and feeling. She had married, at twenty, a man twice her age, who had left her a widow at twenty-five, with a comfortable independence. She had not been sufficiently in love to mourn him very deeply; and she had soon recovered from her loss.

Here she was now—fresh in heart and feeling, not a day older by reason of an unnecessary wear and tear upon her sensibilities; and Emma Steele was just such another.

How much better they were off than Gratia Moore, I argued, who cried herself to sleep every night because things had not gone well with her and a weak, harsh man whose superior she was in every way.

I suppose it may be accepted as a proof of Emma's fascination that even I took her—well, if not exactly into my heart, at least into my fancy. She made herself useful, and, to a certain extent necessary, to every member of our little family. She advised me as to my worsted work, and copied off several elaborate letters for me out of her own pattern-book. She made cake after her own receipt, and instructed the cook in a new kind of bread when the lady of the house found herself in a dilemma upon one or two occasions. She played the accompaniments to three or four old songs which Gibson used to sing in his youth and now revived for our benefit.

Altogether she was the very life of the house—and all this in a fresh, bright, natural way that was infinitely attractive and irresistible.

A great deal may be condensed into one week. At the end of the time that Emma Steele and Mr. Hays spent together at the "Anchorage" it did not require a very acute observer to determine that Mr. Hays had surrendered sans discretion to the fair, gracious Emma.

I confess that I spent more time in debating whether or not she would accept him.

It struck me that she might do a great deal better for herself than to marry Gibson Hays—a widower, with three children, and by no means a rich man; hardly a rising man even—he was too lazy for that, or for anything which would require much exertion. But, on the other hand, Emma was not happy at home.

I have a shrewd suspicion that she desired to get married so as to be independent of her step-mother. To crown all—she had not seen very many men before this experience.

Indeed, before the next summer I heard, and through Gratia Moore, of his approaching marriage. He wrote to acquaint her of the fact. The bride elect was his cousin, Emma Steele.

Gratia Moore brought over his letter to show me. She was perfectly calm and composed in telling me about it.

Poor girl, I fancy that she had already wept in silence and solitude all the tears she had to shed. She was strong now to endure and to conceal the grief that had dimmed her eyes and faded her cheeks. This had been such a terribly hard trial for her—worse for her in her isolation, and in her barren, dull life, than for any one else I could think of.

She was very calm and quiet, even when she told

me that she would be obliged to give up her dear little niece.

"As a matter of course their father wants them with him. He will be married in October, and in November he will come for them. Tell me about Miss Steele, please. Is she a gentle, kind person? Will she be likely to love my dear little girls?"

"Yes, I think so. She has a step-mother herself, and you know it is said that a fellow-feeling makes us wondrous kind. Yes, I think she will try to do her duty."

Then we talked about other things. I wanted Gratia to dwell as little as possible on this subject. I asked her, however, what she intended to do when the time came for her to give up her little charges.

"It will be necessary for you to do something instead. Will you try to get other scholars?"

I was almost sorry I had asked this question. She put up her hand to her head in a helpless kind of way.

"I am sure I don't know what I shall do," she said.

I resolved to look about me for pupils to take the place of those she would lose. I had very little difficulty in doing so. She was very popular, and very highly esteemed.

I heard of three or four little girls whose mammae would send them to Miss Gratia Moore. I mean very little girls indeed—too small to go to the school where I taught.

I had a half-formed idea in my own mind that Gratia should gradually establish a kind of kindergarten. She had a surprising influence with children; they all loved her, and she was happier in looking after them than in any other way.

But in October—just about the time of Gibson Hays's marriage—Mrs. Moore was taken suddenly ill. From the beginning of her attack the doctors held out very slight hope of her recovery.

Her illness was so unexpected and so short that I am sure her daughter hardly realized the danger when Mrs. Moore's life of suffering and pain was suddenly brought to an end, and she died in Gratia's arms.

I had never before realized how friendless my poor Gratia was—how alone in the world—until the time came for making the preparations for the funeral. She had absolutely no male relative to call upon to act as official mourner or to stand by her through all the trying scenes before her. She however was too bowed down by grief to think of this, or to care for it, had she remembered that such was the case.

There were people coming and going constantly, and every one did what he or she considered expedient in the matter.

I never knew by which one of these officious friends Gibson Hays was sent for; but at all events he came on the day of the funeral.

I was standing holding Gratia in my arms, endeavouring to lead her away from the coffin where lay the worn face of the mother to whom she had just said a heartrending farewell.

Suddenly raising my eyes, I caught sight of Mr. Hays standing just within the room. He was as pale as death, and his lips were set firmly over his teeth, as if to keep back a groan. I motioned him away out of Gratia's sight. It seemed to me that it would kill her to see him then—when it was too late—when it might be too late for him to have been too late.

I found out afterwards that he had been married that very day, and that he had come to that chamber of death from Emma's lovely presence. When he went back to her he took his children with him.

How Gratia lived and worked, and grew in grace and strength after that you may imagine for yourself.

G. M. R.

A CURIOUS gold earring, set with turquoises, has lately been sent on loan to the London International Exhibition by Mr. F. Drew. It was made at Leh, in Ladakh, in the Himalayas, by a native workman, and is a facsimile of those worn in one ear only by the native tea-merchants who trade between Leh and Lhasa.

A GOOD CLAIM.—The French President is petitioned to death, but verily the washerwoman, Mme. Forest, has some claim on him for the pension. She says: "I received in my arms the bullet which was destined for you in 1848." The washerwoman was then a blooming girl; she was passing by when a pistol was fired at M. Thiers in 1848; the bullet missed its billet, but lodged in her flesh. The girl is now in her 50th year.

DEATH OF A CENTENARIAN.—The journals announce the death in her 102nd year of the Marquise de Cornimont de Bellefontaine, at her chateau in the Vosges. The deceased was lady of honour to Queen Marie-Antoinette, and owed her preservation, at the time of the invasion of the Tuilleries, to the devotedness of a Swiss who rolled her up in a packet of linen, and afterwards concealed her in his house

for several days. She left France at that period and did not return until the reign of Charles X. Her husband was for a long time the king's aide-de-camp.

FACETIÆ.

WHY does a sculptor die the most horrible of deaths? He makes faces and "busts."

A MAN, hearing that a raven would live two hundred years, bought one to test the truth of the assertion.

CURRAN was once asked by one of his brother lawyers: "Do you see anything ridiculous in this wig?" "Nothing but the head," was the reply.

AFTER THE BALL.

"Did I say anything foolish, Parker, when you woke me this morning?"

"No, miss. You looked it!"—Punch.

"WHEN TAKEN to be WELL SHAKEN."—A gentleman from California, at present on a visit to England, assures us that earthquakes are so common at San Francisco that even the ragged urchins in the streets have shook heads!—Fun.

BENIGHTED BEINGS.

"Spile the hay? Ay, but the master let 'em in. They be a school, Jim. A poor, ignorant lot come from London for the day; and, maybe, none on 'em ain't never seen a hayfield afore!"—Punch.

BY GUNS!—We are informed that during the past season the Italian coral fishery has been very successful, and will realize about three million francs. This is good news for the babies, and seems to promise a large crop of teeth.—Fun.

PURE REASON.

"You will grow up ugly, Ada, if you make faces."

"Did you make faces when you were a little girl, auntie?"

NO ROSE WITHOUT A THORN.

Son and Heir (just home from school, and surrounded by his adoring womankind): "I say! Just wouldn't the holidays be jolly if it wasn't for the dentist!"—Punch.

ASCENSION DAY.

"We shall not be open to-morrow," said a Parisian shopkeeper to a Yankee customer, "because to-morrow is Ascension Day."

"Ah!" said the American; "can you tell me from where does the balloon go up?"

A LAST RESORT.

Mrs. Brown: "Why, May, my love, why are you in mourning?"

May: "I'm not in mourning, Mrs. Brown, but as the widows are getting all the offers now-a-days we poor girls have to resort to artifice."

AN ALTERNATIVE.

Owner of Canine Individual: "Not a good house-dog because he didn't bark when you came? He generally barks at beggars, but he's always mute when he's after rats and that sort of vermin."—Fun.

THE CLOSE OF THE SEASON.

Housemaid (to constant visitor): "Miss sends you this, and you needn't come again, for we're all going to the sea-side on Saturday."

Mendicant: "Tell the lady I'm much obliged to her, and I'm going to the sea-side myself next week!"—Punch.

LATEST FROM THE PLAYGROUND.

First Schoolboy: "You're the new boy, ain't you? Look here, do you collect stamps?"

Second Ditto (reassured): "Ye-s."

First Schoolboy: "Then there's one for you!" [Comes down heavily on his toes, and cuts off!—Punch.]

A PUZZLING RELATION.—A Pittsburgh paper recently stated that a gentleman of the name of Appleton, who nearly perished in a fire, was the favourite grandson of his uncle. It is our proud duty to add the farther information that his cousin declared he was the best son he had ever had.—Fun.

ANXIOUS FOR THE TRUTH.—A gentleman was staying at a country house, when, hearing a great clatter below, one morning, he looked out and saw a couple of grooms holding one of the servant-maids on a horse, which they led with difficulty once round the yard. He asked them what it all meant. "Well, you see, sir," said they, "we're going to take the horse to market to be sold, and we want to be able to say he has carried a lady."

PRECISION.

A witness in court, who had been cautioned to give a precise answer to every question, and not talk about what he might think the question meant, was interrogated as follows:

"You drive a waggon?"

"No, sir, I do not."

"Why, sir, did you not tell my learned friend so this moment?"

"No, sir, I did not."
 "Now, sir, I put it to you on your oath. Do you drive a waggon?"
 "No, sir."
 "What is your occupation, then?"
 "I drive a horse."

DIDN'T LIKE MUTTON.

A good story is told of the recent excellent performance of Handel's "Messiah" at a Baptist church.

A farmer took his wife to hear the grand music so splendidly rendered on that occasion, and, after listening with apparent enjoyment, the pair became suddenly interested in one of the grand choruses: "We all, like sheep, have gone astray."

First a sharp soprano voice exclaimed:
 "We all, like sheep—"
 Next a deep bass voice uttered, in the most earnest tone:

"We all, like sheep—"
 Then all the singers at once asserted:
 "We all, like sheep—"
 "Darn'd if I do!" exclaimed old Rustons to his partner. "I like beef and bacon, but I can't bear sheep meat!"

There was an audible titter in that vicinity, but the splendid music attracted attention from the pair, and they quietly slipped out.

A SINGULAR ECHO.

We once saw a story of Patrick, who heard his master tell of a very remarkable echo over the hill in the woods. Patrick had a curiosity to try the echo himself, so away he went. The account of his excursion we will take as he gave it to his master: "I jist run over to the place ye was spakin' uv, to converse a bit wid the wonderful orathar. So says I, 'Hullo!'"

"Hullo, hullo, hullo, you noisy rascal!"
 "I thought that was very queer, sir, and I said 'Hullo' again."
 "Hullo yourself," said the echo, "you began it first."

"What are you made of?" says I.
 "Shut your mouth," says the echo.
 "So says I, 'Ye blatherin' scoundrel, if ye were flesh, like an honest man, I'd hammer ye till the mother of ye wouldn't know her impudent son.' And what do you think the echo said to that, sir?"
 "Scamper, ye baste of a paddy," says he, "or if I catch ye I'll break every bone in yer old body. And it hit me on the head with a big stone, sir, and was nigh knocking the poor brain out of me. So I run as fast as ever I could, till at last I'm here to tell ye uv it, sir."

EFFECTS OF THE HOT WEATHER.

Mr. Lazie Tonge engaged a valet to relieve him from the labour of parting his back hair.

Mr. Scamper found that business took him suddenly (in a friend's yacht) to the cooling coast of Norway, whence he telegraphed to his wife that, as he most probably would be detained some weeks, she had better take the children down to Felixstowe or Worthing.

Mr. Foppington saved a pound a week by giving up his usual bouquet for his button-hole, on the excuse that it was—aw—too hot you know to carry things.

Mr. Larker bought a squirt, and amused himself by sprinkling all the passers-by who had not their umbrellas up.

Mr. Neerdowael resolved to do something for a livelihood, but so intense was the heat that his good resolution quickly melted quite away.

Miss Walsingham ate two-and-twenty ices at a ball, finding nothing else to do, as the men had all struck dancing.

Mr. Swetter joined a reading party who proposed to take it coolly and to go to Iceland.

Mr. Guzzlemore daily drank two quarts of champagne cup with his dinner, and even then protested that his throat was as dry as a debate upon Scotch law reform.

Mr. Clifaker complained of business being sadly slack, as, in consequence of the hot weather, the wells all left their heavy jewellery at home, and went about with next to nothing in their pockets.

Mr. Latebird came home nightly at three o'clock a.m., on the plea that the great heat prevented him from sleeping until the smaller hours.

Mr. Sweller, of the Albany, was seen walking in a dust-coat, and without his gloves.

Mrs. MacSkindynt put her servants on board wages, and fed her husband on cold mutton while the great heat lasted.

Mr. Reader found his strength so much reduced by the hot weather that he was reluctantly obliged to leave his books and join a crew in pulling up from Maidenhead to Oxford.

Mr. Downie was so greatly overcome by the hot weather that in a moment of exhaustion he overpaid a cabman.

Mr. Tippeton discovered that the salmon had got

into his head before the second entrée, which he protested was "inconsequent—his—stomach—his—high-temperature."

Mr. Diddler found his resources so exhausted by the heat that he felt himself compelled to leave his lodgings without settling with his landlady.

Mr. Phunkie was so greatly overcome by the high temperature that in the heat of the moment he used a rather warm expression while dancing with Miss Flirtingly, and has since been tortured by the thought that he is bound now to propose to her.

Mr. Foresight has just laid in his winter stock of coal, at an advance of more than twelve shillings a ton, which, in total ignorance of any other reason, he attributes wholly to the wondrously hot weather. —Punch.

LOVE AND CARE.—AN ALLEGORY.

A YOUTH was travelling on a summer's day.

When suddenly a stranger
 Appeared before him, saying, "Sir, your way

Is rough and full of danger;

And I—you've heard of me; my name is

Care—

Intend, for your protection,

To dog your steps, and watch you, every-
 where,

With keen, but kind, inspection!"

A sorry sight he seemed; and so the lad,

Who wished not his assistance,

Stepped off with quickened pace; while,

slow and sad,

Care followed at a distance.

And soon the youth espies along the way,

Tripping in wanton measure,

A dashing dame, very fine and gay—

Her name (she said) was Pleasure.

"Come! follow me!" the merry maiden

cried,

With peals of silver laughter;

"I will—I will!" the joyful youth replied,

And gaily followed after.

Alas! she led him such a crazy dance,

He presently grew tired,—

And stopped, at length—unwilling to ad-
 vance

Through paths so much bemired.

To Pleasure's ways no longer now inclined,

He offered small resistance

When Care came up (for he was close be-
 hind)

And tendered his assistance.

But, soon escaping from his hated guide,

He spied a pensive maiden

Of wondrous beauty, by a fountain's
 side

With sprigs of myrtle laden.

"Oh, Love!" he cried (for truly it was
 she),

"I beg your kind endeavour

From this detested Care to set me free;

And keep me so for ever!"

"Nay!" said the maid; "and yet my vo-
 taries swear

My charms are so beguiling

That in my cheering presence even Care

Has got a trick of smiling!"

J. G. S.

GEMS.

He who is conspiring against the peace of another necessarily loses his own.

THERE is nothing that lightens one's burden so quickly, and so much as to help other people carry theirs.

Do the best you can where you are; and when that is done you will see an opening for something better.

If you are conscious of certain infirmities of character, select companions in whose society you would be ashamed to give way to them.

THE swan subdues the eagle when he attacks her on her own element; so the weakest may subdue the strongest foe if he but keep his place and do his duty.

Who is wise? He that is teachable. Who is mighty? He that conquers himself. Who is rich? He that is contented. Who is honoured? He that honours others.

CHARITY is never lost; it may meet with ingratitude, or be of no service to those on whom it was bestowed, yet it ever does a work of beauty and grace upon the heart of the giver.

LEARN in youth, if you can, that happiness is not outside, but inside. A good heart and a clear con-

science bring happiness, which no riches and no circumstances alone ever do.

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

THE CORRECT WEIGHT OF MILK.—Mr. Gail Borden, of White Plains, N.Y., who conducts an establishment for preparing condensed milk, has been making some experiments for the purpose of determining the correct weight of crude milk. He took the milk of several cows, and mingling it together and then thoroughly cooling it, he had it accurately weighed. The result was that a quart of milk, so measured and weighed on delicate scales, was equal to 2 lb. 2½ oz. The tests were made with different samples of milk at different times, but without materially altering the weight. Mr. Borden has adopted the above as a true weight of a quart of milk of fair average quality. Hence, any person who buys milk may determine by weight, with satisfactory accuracy, whether he receives a quart when he is required to pay for that quantity.

STATISTICS.

THE PRECIOUS METALS.—The imports of gold bullion and specie into the United Kingdom in the first half of the year 1872, registered at the Custom House, amounted to 8,107,248l., being less by 2,919,910l. than in the corresponding half of the preceding year; and the registered exports of gold amounted to 8,753,277l., an increase of 3,374,730l. The registered imports of silver in the first half of the year 1872 amounted to 5,577,109l., being less by 3,111,096l. than in the corresponding half of the preceding year; and the registered exports of silver amounted to 5,997,363l., an increase of 715,456l. Thus, comparing the first half of 1872 with that of 1871, our imports of gold and silver bullion and specie show a decrease of 6,631,000l., and our exports of those articles an increase of 4,090,166l.; and both in gold and silver our exports have exceeded our imports.

MISCELLANEOUS.

We understand that Messrs. Heaton, of Birmingham, have entered into a contract with the English Government to coin a large quantity of silver. It is to be delivered in the course of this year.

A RESTAURATEUR of Tours having sued the French Government for the keep of Prince Frederick Charles (the Red Prince) and his staff in February and March, 1871, to the amount of 1,300l., has had awarded him one-half of his claim, 600l.

COAL IN TEXAS.—Large fields of superior bituminous coal have been recently discovered near San Antonio, Texas. The vein is near the surface, it is 4 ft. thick, and it promises an almost inexhaustible supply of excellent coal.

Few people form an exact idea of the number of *cafés, estaminets, and cabarets* in Paris. It results from a recent statistical account that there are 5,800 establishments where wine is sold, and that employ 15,000 individuals. The amount of business done yearly is 150 millions.

ANTS.—Red ants, if made angry, discharge a very pungent acid substance, called formic acid, "formica" being Latin for ant. If these ants are distilled a substance is produced so burning that if it is dropped on the skin it cuts into it like fire. It is also derived from the stinging nettle.

COAL IN THE WEST.—The present annual quantity of coal wrought in the Somerset and Gloucestershire coal-field is 1,000,000 tons or less. Taking it at this figure, there is enough coal within a depth of 1,500 ft. to last for 1,719 years. If we go down to 3,000 ft. we gain 1,520 years more, and if we go on to 6,000 ft. we prolong the period by 2,237 years. The total quantity down to a depth of 4,000 ft. is equal to a supply at the present rate for 4,219 years. Of course the consumption is increasing, but there is evidently a wide scope for its growth. A fourfold consumption at a workable depth of 4,000 ft. would find a supply for more than 1,000 years.

THE GREAT AUSTRALIAN OVERLAND TELEGRAPH.—Mr. Todd, superintendent of telegraphs in South Australia, proposes to travel overland to Adelaide, so as to inspect the whole of the great overland Australian telegraph line, which he hopes to leave in good order. The establishment of through wire communication is promised this month. It is proposed to build some stations at various points along the great line, upon which it would seem that 250 miles remained to be completed at the close of April. There have been so many disappointments in regard to what is no doubt a very trying and difficult enterprise that possibly through communication may not be established over the line after all this month. The expenditure made upon the line to the close of March amounted to 190,000l.

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NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JUVENILE.—At the cricket match played between Oxford and Cambridge this year the victory was obtained by the latter by as much as one innings and 168 runs. We believe that never before has Oxford sustained so severe a defeat in the cricket field. In the match recently played between the Gentlemen and Players the Gentlemen won with five wickets to spare.

D. J. S.—Slight cases of rheumatism are often cured by feeding on asparagus, and more chronic cases are much relieved by this vegetable, especially if the patient carefully avoids all acids, whether in food or beverage. The Jerusalem artichoke has also a similar effect in relieving rheumatism. The heads may be eaten in the usual way; but tea made from the leaves of the stalks, and drunk three or four times a day, is a more certain remedy, though not equally agreeable.

MARSH.—The late Prince Consort, the husband of our Queen, died of gastric fever on the 14th December, 1891. The Memorial erected to his fame stands on the site of the Great Exhibition of 1851. Perhaps the Memorial may be said to be finished, yet it is not complete, as it wants the statue of the Prince Consort, for which the canopy is built. The statue will we believe represent His Royal Highness in a seated position, and is in the hands of the celebrated sculptor Mr. Foley, to whom it was entrusted after the death of Baron Marochetti.

G. B. F. G.—How a person who describes himself as a forerunner in a reputable mechanical trade can be such an individual as to be also "under the thumb" of anybody is a problem the demonstration of which it is opined would take more space than an ordinary mathematical theorem. It is clear however that it is useless for such an individual to go courting, for the ladies like freedom of position is a lover above all things. Thus your complete omission of any particulars of your personal appearance is of less importance than it might have been.

MARK W.—The ability of individuals almost always shows itself in early life, although if the bent of the genius be then neglected or depressed by pursuits of a foreign nature the growth of a man's powers may be slow or they may never grow. If you place the foal of a race horse to do the duty of turning a mill you must not be disappointed if his performances do not equal those of his sire, nor be surprised if in his efforts to get through his routine work some sparks of the breed should occasionally be emitted. Sir Walter Scott did not write his "Lay" till he was thirty-four, and he was forty-three when "Waverley" was published.

RICHARD B.—The celebrated Daniel Lambert died in 1809 in his fortieth year. His weight was 52st. 12lbs., or 740 pounds. But if true this weight has been surpassed by a coloured woman, probably the largest and heaviest person of her sex in the world, who died at St. Louis, a few weeks ago, at the age of 51 years. The almost incredible statement is made that she weighed between 900 and 1,000 pounds, was 5 feet 10 inches in height, 13 inches across the shoulders, and that her arms were 30 inches in circumference. It is said that it took eight men and six rollers combined to lower her from the wagon into her grave.

W. J. JUNE.—The only available means appears to be the plentiful insertion of advertisements in the local newspapers. 2 Clerks are rather at a discount in Australia. The salary for an ordinary situation when obtained is 150s. a year. 3 The climate of Australia is generally healthy. In some parts the hot winds which periodically occur are a nuisance to fresh comers, and the appearance of drought is more frequent than in England. The cost of living is much higher than in England, excepting for agricultural labourers and persons of that class. Letters of recommendation are useful to emigrants.

LARRY.—We are afraid that, notwithstanding the numerous specifics proffered for the purpose, it is almost impossible to re-fertilize that flesh-coloured spot which makes its appearance on the crown of some heads as the years pass away. The hairdresser naturally calls your attention to the fact that "it" is "thinning at the top" and suggests a remedy which is often applied. The "thinning" process however goes on, and the scientists have yet to make the discovery which will rehabilitate those who "have got no wool on the top of the head in the place where the wool ought to grow." Of course a fortune awaits the enterprising individual whose announcement of such a discovery can endure the necessary tests.

EMMELINE.—We feel some difficulty in recommending a costume for the occasion, especially as we are afraid that your notions of style and economy are not consistent. However we may say that in coming your question over and searching for an answer we find that the pretty

fashion of corsets is reviving, and think the following equipment may suit the occasion. Skirt of dark gray mousseline de laine, trimmed with wide bias scalloped bands, or several narrow flounces scalloped and edged with blue silk; upper skirt of lighter gray, with spots or small blue flounces, scalloped round with blue silk; corselet and basque entirely of blue silk, the under-body and sleeves matching either the skirt or tunic, according to taste. To render this cooler a white muslin high body may be worn; but in this case braces of blue ribbon with bows on the shoulders should be added.

VALENTINE.—1. By consulting the indices to the volumes published during the year you can obtain the information. 2 The eldest son of a marquis is styled earl, and all the sons of a marquis have the title of Lord and Right Honourable. 3 Double counterpoint is an artifice in music whereby the parts are so combined that they may without inconvenience be transposed from acute to grave if they are placed above the theme and from grave to acute if they are placed below it, while the theme suffers no change in its melody whether the counterpoint exists in one of the extreme parts or in one of the intermediate. There are seven different modes in which these inversions can be made, of which—according to Cherubini—double counterpoint in the twelfth is one of the most used and one of the richest in resources. 4 The difference between a major and a minor key consists in the mode in which the tones, semitones, etc., are arranged between a given sound and its octave above or below; thus the production of what is called the sharp series of keys arises from a regular succession of perfect fifths taken in ascending, or fourths in descending, beginning with C for the major ones or A for the minor ones. 5 Sirius, or the Dog Star, is situated in the right shoulder of the constellation Orion. Astronomers have been unable to calculate its distance from the earth. One hypothesis suggests a distance of about twenty trillions of English miles! Another states the distance to be very much greater. 6 The handwriting is plain and bold.

THE WOODLAND GATE.

A maiden stands by the woodland gate,
Where the willow boughs hang over,
Her round arms crossed on the topmost bar,
While her soft brown eyes gaze out afar
O'er the fields of blossoming clover.
And a half-impatient, restless look
In the depths of her dark eyes lingers,
And the white brow wears an anxious frown
As she flings the fragrant wild rose down
She has crushed in her taper fingers.

"How dull is my life! How small and mean
Are the trifles that fill its measure—
Birds and blossoms and leaf-crowned trees
The slow and dull-souled cloud may please,
But I long for the gay world's pleasure,
I hate the uneven road and lowly,
Of a life so plain and lowly.
The same dull routine o'er and o'er—
Each day is like the one before,
And all creep by so slowly.

"I'd join the gay world's giddy throng
And share its wealth and splendour;
I ne'er can wed plain Robert Gray,
And pass my life this hum-drum way—
Though his heart be true and tender;
The world is hollow and false and cold,
Say those who dwell within it;
But Fortune's favour is worth the while—
I long to bask in her sunny smile,
And my heart is set to win it!"

The forest trees across the fields
Their lengthened shades were throwing,
While all athwart the western skies
Plamed up the royal sunset dyes
In gold and crimson glowing.
When, by the brown old woodland gate,
A youth and maiden parted—
A tear or two on Robert's face
As from the dear old trysting-place
He turned, half broken-hearted.

N. D. B.

ARIADNE K. M., twenty-three, tall, and domesticated, would like to marry a tall, dark, loving young man; a tradesman's son preferred.

JANET N., twenty, tall, dark, good figure, and accomplished. Respondent must be a good singer; an officer in the Navy preferred.

OCEAN, twenty-eight, medium height, good looking, fair complexion, in the Royal Navy. Respondent must be pretty and accomplished.

WILLIAM B., twenty-eight, 5ft. 4in., tall, handsome, and amiable. Respondent must be fair, loving, handsome, and about the same age and height.

WILLIAM REFFUS, 5ft. 7in., fair, considered handsome, wishes to marry a young lady who is good looking; a brunette preferred.

SAM, twenty-six, 5ft. 5in., fair, and a merchant's clerk. Respondent must be about twenty, pretty, intelligent, and affectionate.

SCOTTIE, a gunner in the Royal Artillery, twenty, 5ft. 5in., wishes to marry a young English lassie who is pretty and industrious.

ANNIE, nineteen, medium height, fair, light gray eyes, loving, and domesticated. Respondent must be tall, dark, and able to keep a wife comfortably; a mechanic preferred.

LUCY E., twenty-three, very pretty, and accomplished, would like to marry a tall, dark gentleman, who is very loving, fond of home, and able to make a deserving wife happy.

LOVELY ADA, eighteen, medium height, dark hair, blue eyes, rosy cheeks, pretty, loving and fond of singing. Respondent must be about twenty-three, fair, and a respectable tradesman.

WILLIAM W., twenty-five, 5ft. 8in., dark-brown eyes, fair, loving, and a tradesman's son. Respondent must not be more than twenty, handsome, domesticated, and fond of children.

MATTHEW S., twenty-eight, tall, handsome, and an

officer in one of the finest regiments in England, would like to marry a young lady, who must be pretty and very loving.

C. M., twenty-three, very lively, good tempered, and filling a good situation. Respondent must be dark and mainly looking with a loving heart, from twenty-six to thirty-five years of age.

JAMES M., twenty-eight, rather tall, handsome, fond of music, and in a good position. Respondent must be about twenty, pretty, accomplished, and have a little money.

ALEXANDER wishes to get married; he is twenty, medium height, dark, handsome. He is very respectfully connected, and if any young lady will take pity upon him he hopes he will prove a sincere admirer.

MARY MARIAM, nineteen, good tempered, thoroughly domesticated, and has a little money. Respondent must be a young man about twenty-three, dark, and in a good situation.

N. K., twenty-three, fair, has a small income, lived most of his years in Scotland, but now wishes to settle in England. Respondent should be fair, not more than twenty years of age, accomplished, and able to make a young man happy.

ELVIDA, twenty-six, tall, auburn hair, fair complexion, pretty, very domesticated and loving, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be fair, able to keep a wife comfortably, and about thirty; a sergeant in the Army preferred.

E. Q. H., twenty-nine, medium height, fair hair, loving, fond of home, able to cook a dinner, and would make a good wife. Respondent must be about thirty-three, and fair; an Englishman, a native of Northumberland preferred.

CLARA, twenty-nine, handsome, brown hair, dark eyes, affectionate, good tempered, and having a good home of her own, wishes to marry a gentleman about thirty, who is tall, dark, handsome, and loving; a good tradesman preferred.

I. S., twenty-five, medium height, light complexion, would like to marry a young lady who has a little money, and would not object to enter into a small business. "I. S." is industrious and saving, and would make a very loving husband.

LOUISA W., eighteen, medium height, fair hair and eyes, a loving disposition, and domesticated. Respondent must be twenty-three, tall, handsome, loving, fond of home, and have a little money; a farmer preferred.

FAIR MARIGOLD, twenty-eight, medium height, dark complexion, pretty, loving and domesticated. Respondent should be an elderly gentleman who has retired from business; he must be affectionate, fond of music, and good tempered.

ELIZABETH M., nineteen, tall, rather fair, pretty, domesticated, and of a loving disposition. Respondent should be tall, dark, fond of home, age not over twenty-five years, and able to keep a wife comfortably; only those who are really genuine need reply; a tradesman preferred.

COMMUNICATIONS RECEIVED:

JAMES is responded to by—"Emma F." nineteen, tall, pretty, fond of home, and a domestic servant.

LALLA ROOKE by—"A Tradesman," twenty-one, 5ft. 5in., fair complexion, and of very steady habits.

JOSEPH by—"Grace G." twenty-three, medium height, affectionate, and a domestic servant.

HUGH by—"Chloris B. E." twenty, very pretty, accomplished, and of a very loving nature; would try to make "Hugh" comfortable.

SUSIE by—"Lonely George," twenty-one, dark hair, hazel eyes, dark complexion, fond of singing, loving, and is in the Navy.

WILLIAM by—"Sarah," thirty-eight, of a loving disposition, a teetotaler, a good housewife, and can turn her hand to anything.

IDA LEE by—"Happy Jack" 5ft. 6in., dark complexion, of a loving disposition, amiable temper, handsome, a publican's son, and very fond of music.

FRANCIS by—"Nellie," twenty, medium height, fair complexion, blue eyes, domesticated, loving, and will make a good wife.

JAMES W. by—"Lottie S." nineteen, 5ft. 6in., dark hair, blue eyes, pretty, well educated, and extremely fond of music; would make a loving wife.

ROSE H. by—"H. O. B." twenty-two, who almost corresponds with her advertisement, being tall, fair, etc.; he holds a first-class situation, with good prospects of getting on in life.

KEDDY W. by—"M. K. W." twenty-three, tall, fair, amiable, and feels confident she would make home all that a sensible man could desire; she has had experience in housekeeping for some time past.

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N.B.—CORRESPONDENTS MUST ADDRESS THEIR LETTERS TO THE EDITOR OF "THE LONDON READER," 334, Strand, W.C.

††† We cannot undertake to return Rejected Manuscripts. As they are sent to us voluntarily, authors should retain copies.

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